




Expectation

Derived from
One's Own Point of View

Bhikkhu Revata



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Expectation
Derived from
One's Own Point of View

A person's expectations about a certain society, about a certain group, and about another person will be different according to that person's point of view.

How people have been educated since they were young, and the many ways they have been inculcated with the knowledge handed down from one generation to another, all create very different perceptions in people's minds and strongly influence them in different ways.

When the perceptions are different, the point of view will be different.

Which is greater in this world, the number of people who hold wrong perceptions, or the number of people who hold right perceptions?

The more bad perceptions we have, the more we suffer.

People are changeable. A person can poison you. Dhamma is unchanging; it is true at all times, and never poisons you.

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*Namo tassa bhagarato arahato
sammā sambuddhassa*

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*Dedicated to all the Sangha
who have sustained the
original teachings of the Buddha
and kept them unadulterated
over the centuries.*

SABBADĀNAM DHAMMADĀNAM JINĀTI
The gift of truth excels all other gifts.

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Bhikkhu Revata

Pa-Auk Angthong, Thailand
(16th September 2015)

INTRODUCTION

Expectation!

You expect. We expect. Everyone expects. This is common to all of us. We live on hope and expectation. There is no one who is without expectations in life! In the same way, there is no one who is without points of view. Expectations and points of view have a mutual, causal relationship. If our points of view are different, our expectations will be different as a consequence. Our expectations and actions are very much determined by our points of view.

Our points of view vary from time to time due to many reasons. Sometimes they vary because of hearing something repeatedly, or because of tradition, or sometimes because of surmise. Sometimes they vary because of reasoning, sometimes because of our background or education, or sometimes because of the place where we live. They vary sometimes due to time and conditions, and sometimes according to what is accepted by many. Sometimes our points of view vary because of our likes and dislikes as well.

Points of view are nothing more than perspectives. Mere points of view are not the truth. Only when ignorance, or not knowing the truth, is expelled, new vision which is not a point of view is attained. We should not strongly cling to points of view of any sort in life. Instead we should balance them when they should be balanced, we should improve them when we ought to improve them, and we must give them up when we know they are wrong.

In this book, I have shared with the reader how the bodhisatta had practised while regarding what was right as wrong and what was wrong as right, and how he later gave up what was wrong and improved his points of view, so that he was able to tread the right path as he was seeking for the truth.

We are also people who hold what is wrong to be right and what is right to be wrong, not only in this very life but also throughout the round of rebirths.

When our bad kamma ripens, we think that what is wrong is right, and what is right is wrong. This is what I share with all the readers of this book.

Without holding onto any points of view...

May you all be able to read this *Expectation Derived from One's Own Point of View* with an open mind and receive much benefit from it.

May you all be able to engage in practising the true teachings of the Buddha!

May you all be free from all suffering!

Much Mettā,

Bhikkhu Revata

Pa-Auk Angthong, Thailand
(15th September 2015)

BASED ON THE TALK

Expectation Derived From One's Own Point of View

Points of View

Today I am going to give a talk. The name of the talk I am going to give is 'Expectation Derived from One's Own Point of View'. As you all know, we don't all have the same point of view; we all have different points of view. Our point of view varies depending on how we grew up, the education we received, and the knowledge we have gained through studying. Our points of view differ according to our knowledge. Because of differences in points of view, our expectations are consequently different too. Having different points of view, we may think and expect and hope differently from one another as well.

Even though you are aware that people differ in their points of view, you may not be aware that the point of view of the bodhisatta prior to his Full Enlightenment was different from the point of view of the Buddha. Here what I want to explain to all of you in particular is how the bodhisatta and the

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Buddha and His disciples differed in the points of view that they held in their lifetimes. I want to explain this in today's talk, 'Expectation Derived from One's Own Point of View'.

The point of view of the bodhisatta and the point of view of the Buddha were different. Many Buddhists are unaware of this. So to share this knowledge with all of you, I want to ask you one question: Did the bodhisatta meet with the true teaching immediately after he renounced the world? As you all know, he spent his lifetime as a prince in a palace. Because of the sense of urgency that arose in him, he left the palace and renounced the world when he was twenty-nine years old.

Sensual Pleasures, Their Dangers, And the Escape from Them

Why did our bodhisatta renounce the world? Because he was poor? Because he was of low birth? Because he was not prosperous? Because he had no companions? He had everything he needed and was incomparably wealthy. Why did he renounce the world? Do you know why the wise choose the way of renouncing the world? What is your point of view? Yes, you are not wrong to say that the bodhisatta wanted to end dukkha and to transcend birth, aging, sickness, and death. But I want all of you to gain a deeper understanding.

Is there pleasure in sensuality? Yes, there is pleasure in sensuality. The Buddha Himself did not say there is no pleasure in sensuality. He acknowledged that

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there is pleasure in the world. He also observed that the obsession with sensual pleasure is what drives all worldly beings in their relentless pursuit of sensuality.¹

There is pleasure, but only a little, and it comes at great cost. The wise see the faults and the dangers that are inherent in sensuality. But the foolish see only the pleasure in sensuality. They don't see the faults and dangers of sensuality. That's why they pursue sensuality and are unable to give up the pursuit of sensuality.

Our bodhisatta lived in the midst of immense sensual happiness. He enjoyed great sensual pleasure from his earliest youth. All his attendants were exclusively female, with not a single male. All the musicians were only female musicians. All the dancers were female too. So he was in the midst of intense sensuality. However, when he finally saw the faults and dangers inherent in sensuality, he gave up all sensuality and renounced the world, and sought for a way to escape from the inherent faults and dangers of sense pleasure.

I will explain further so that you may see the faults and the dangers inherent in sensuality. What is the supreme goal for almost all people in the world? Sensual happiness. Sensual happiness is the highest goal of everyone in the world. Nothing more than this. They can't go beyond this. This is their utmost goal.

¹ AN.III.3.1.3 Dutiyāssādasuttam (AN 3.105 The Second Discourse on Gratification).

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Why is it that we were educated from the time we were young? We attended schools and universities to receive an education because the better our education, the higher might be our position in life, and therefore the greater will be our sensual happiness. But this is just speaking in general and is not necessarily true for all. So from our youth, we go about preparing for sensual attainments such as gain and fame and so on.

Here I want all of you to consider deeply: Which is longer, the duration of time it takes us to reach our sensual goal, or the time we spend experiencing our sensual happiness? Consider how much time we spend on preparation. We make a lot of effort. We spend time and effort to reach our sensual goal. But when we reach our goal, the time we have to experience the ensuing happiness is short and fleeting.

The things you do along the way, as you are advancing towards your goal, are mostly unwholesome things. The time you spend enjoying your sensual happiness, which is such a short time, is also unwholesome. Between birth and death we live for the most part in the homes of greed, in the homes of hatred, in the homes of delusion, pride, jealousy, and stinginess. Homes like these are truly bad for us. Even though we live in physical houses that we call home, the real dwellings in which most of us live are the abodes of greed, hatred, delusion, pride, jealousy, and stinginess. These primal defilements are with us from the moment of our birth, and they trouble us throughout our lives. Unfortunately, most of us are caught in their grip. They indeed become our real home. The Dhammapada commentary says:

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‘For the heedless, the four woeful states are like their permanent home.’²

As we all know, we don’t often stay for long at places where we are only visitors or guests. It is natural for us to return to our homes. In the same way, the human and deva realms are places we temporarily visit only when the time is ripe. Sooner or later we have to pack up our defilements and return to our real homes somewhere in the four woeful planes.

So all the actions we have done and all the kamma we have accumulated along the way as we are marching towards our sensual goal are unwholesome actions and unwholesome kamma. If such unwholesome kamma yields its results, we will suffer in the four woeful states. These are the faults and the dangers inherent in sensuality. This is something almost all ordinary people are unaware of. Therefore, thinking only of how to enjoy the goal of sensuality, they spend a lot of time, even their entire lives, trying to reach their sensual goal, which is very fleeting.

What do people emphasise more, the goal or the path to reach that goal? They emphasise the goal. Yes, they just want to reach their goal. They don’t give much consideration to how they are marching towards their goal. However they need to do it, reaching their goal is the most important thing. Whether what they do is right or whether it is wrong, their main objective is to reach their goal. In

² Commentary to Dhp. 1 Cakkhupālattheravatthu (The Story of the Elder Cakkhupāla): ‘*Pamattassa ca nāma cattāro apāyā sakagehasadisā*’.

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this way, without analysing or greatly considering the way they march towards their goal, they commit many unwholesome deeds and accumulate a lot of unwholesome kamma.

The wise see the faults and the dangers of all the kamma they accumulate along the way as they march towards their sensual goal. Hence they grow very afraid of the faults and the dangers inherent in sensuality. Initially, they too may see just the happiness of sensuality. That's why they enjoy it. But when the time ripens, supported by their *pāramī* (perfections) and the accumulation of good kamma in the past, they see the faults and the dangers inherent in sensuality. They find the way to escape from that danger.

But not many people see the faults and the dangers inherent in sensuality. Only very few do. As a consequence, the number of people who can renounce the world is very small.

Why are you unable to renounce the world? Because you don't see the faults and the dangers inherent in sensuality. If you don't see the faults and the dangers inherent in sensuality, how can you give up the pursuit of sensuality?

Those who see just the happiness of sensuality will think: 'The bodhisatta was very rich, had a lot of followers and companions, lived in a luxurious house, and lived in the midst of sensuality. Why would he choose to leave the home life for the homeless life? Was he crazy?' There may be many who think in this way.

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But it is only the wise who choose to leave the home life for the homeless life. So did the wise choose in ancient times, so do the wise choose in the present, and so will the wise choose in the future. Those who can renounce are those who see the faults and the dangers inherent in sensuality. That's why they can find the way to escape from the faults and dangers of sensual pleasure.

The Buddha used three Pāli words to explain this – *assāda*, *ādīnava*, and *nissaraṇa*. *Assāda* means seeing the pleasure and happiness in sensuality. Those who see the faults and the dangers inherent in sensuality see the *ādīnava* in sensuality. Those who choose the way to escape from the faults and dangers of sensuality embark on a journey to achieve the escape (*nissaraṇa*) from sensuality.

Not only in his last existence did the bodhisatta renounce the world but also in many other existences, uncountable in number, whether as a rich man or as a king, he had given up many living and non-living things and had chosen the way of renouncing the world.

There is the point of view of those who see just the happiness in sensuality, and then there is the point of view of those who see the faults and the dangers of sensuality. Are these points of view the same? Whose point of view has the greater strength? Those who see the faults and the dangers of sensuality have stronger mental power which will enable them to escape from these faults and dangers. That's why

they are brave enough to give up their pursuit of sensuality.

Consider how difficult it is to give up something that we want to have or something that we have tried very hard to possess. So we should admire those who are brave enough to give up all their possessions, their beloved ones, and all their living and non-living things, so that they might seek for the Dhamma.

Unless you see the faults and the dangers of sensuality, you are not strong enough to resist the attraction of desirable things when you practise meditation. You still see only the happiness in them. This was like the point of view of a gentleman from abroad who met with me; I want to share with you the feelings he expressed about his own experience. He said he had spent several years studying in schools and universities in three different countries, and found that life was still not as peaceful as he had hoped. He and the people around him were never satisfied with what they had and were constantly fighting with each other. He said, 'My neighbours are always fighting with me even though I want to be at peace and get along with them. Life is so complicated.' You can see that the man was bewildered by his own actions and the actions of everyone around him. He was suffering. He started to perceive the faults of sensuality a little, but with a confused mind. He said, 'To a certain extent I have come to understand that no one ever achieves true peace unless he follows the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. The Path that has been discovered by the Buddha is the best way to live life peacefully.' His understand-

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ing was only 'to a certain extent'. His perception of the faults of sensuality was still weak; he still found happiness in sensual pleasures. Therefore he was unable to choose the way of life that would enable him to escape from all misery.

You don't see their faults and dangers either. For that reason, your journey of working your way to the end of suffering will be full of suffering. Because your mind inclines to go back home, to return to your beloved ones, or to go to your shops or stalls or companies, how much suffering arises for you! But for those who see the faults and the dangers of sensuality and who want to escape from those dangers, walking the Path leading to the end of suffering will give rise to happiness. Are you on the way to suffering, or are you on the way to happiness? Now you are temporarily on the way to happiness. True?

Yes, I am very glad that you can take up the path leading to your real happiness. Even if it is only for a short time, it will be a very great supporting cause for the realisation of Nibbāna. And it will be a supporting cause to reach the end of suffering sooner or later. Consider how difficult it is to be away from our beloved ones, to be apart from the living and non-living things we are attached to, even temporarily and for just a short time! Now you all are fulfilling pāramī by renouncing for a while everything you love, both living and non-living things. Your renunciation will be a supporting cause for you to renounce the world completely in some future existence for the realisation of Nibbāna.

So now I will continue what I was saying about the bodhisatta.

The First Teacher

After his renunciation he approached two teachers. Do you remember who they were? Āḷāra Kālāma and Udaka Rāmaputta. From the first teacher, Āḷāra Kālāma, the bodhisatta learned some meditation techniques. Do you remember what they were? He learned seven attainments under the guidance of Āḷāra Kālāma. Do you know what those seven attainments were?

Suppose you are going to practise *kaṣiṇa* meditation³. If you successfully practise white *kaṣiṇa*, taking white *kaṣiṇa* as object, you can attain first *jhāna*, second *jhāna*, third *jhāna*, and fourth *jhāna* absorption concentration. These are the material *jhānas* (*rūpa-jhāna*). Based on the material *jhānas*, you can proceed to the immaterial *jhānas* (*arūpa-jhāna*). You can practise *jhāna* on the base of boundless space (*ākāśānañcāyatana-jhāna*), the base of boundless consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana-jhāna*), and the base of nothingness (*ākhiñcaññāyatana-jhāna*). These are the seven *jhāna* attainments that the bodhisatta learned to practise under the guidance of his first teacher, Āḷāra Kālāma. The bodhisatta was able to master them within just a few days. Āḷāra

³ There are ten objects that are used in *kaṣiṇa* meditation: earth *kaṣiṇa*, water *kaṣiṇa*, fire *kaṣiṇa*, wind *kaṣiṇa*, black *kaṣiṇa*, yellow *kaṣiṇa*, red *kaṣiṇa*, white *kaṣiṇa*, light *kaṣiṇa*, and space *kaṣiṇa*.

The First Teacher

Kālāma admired the bodhisatta very much for accomplishing in a short time the same seven attainments that Āḷāra Kālāma had taken a long time to practise successfully. Because of his admiration, Āḷāra Kālāma offered half of his disciples to the bodhisatta and asked him to be their teacher.

What did the bodhisatta do at that time? The bodhisatta thought, 'This is not for the realisation of the Dhamma, this is not for disenchantment, this is not the way to make an end of suffering, this is not the way for Full Enlightenment.' For that reason, he didn't accept his teacher's offer. He left his first teacher. Now here please keep in mind the point of view of the bodhisatta. He considered that that was not the way for disenchantment, not the way to make an end of suffering, not the way for Full Enlightenment; therefore he left his first teacher and met with another, his second teacher.

The Second Teacher

Who was his second teacher? Udaka Rāmaputta. What did he teach the bodhisatta? He taught all eight attainments. The eighth attainment is the jhāna of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception (*nevasaññānāsaññāyatana-jhāna*). Within a short time, within two or three days, our bodhisatta was able to master these eight attainments very easily.

What do you think? Had the bodhisatta's second teacher attained these eight attainments when he

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taught them to the bodhisatta? Many Buddhists don't know about this. Udaka Rāmaputta had learned how to practise the eight attainments from his own teacher, but he himself was unable to attain those same attainments when he taught them to the bodhisatta. So when Udaka Rāmaputta saw that his disciple, the bodhisatta, was able to attain the eight attainments within a short time, he admired the bodhisatta very much. What did he do then? He offered all of his disciples to the bodhisatta and asked him to be his teacher.

What do you think? Is it easy for you as a teacher to offer all your disciples to your own disciple? No, it is a very difficult thing to do. But Āḷāra Kālāma and Udaka Rāmaputta had no feelings of jealousy and stinginess towards the bodhisatta, who was better than them. They were very great teachers of that time. How did the bodhisatta reflect then? What did the bodhisatta consider? He thought, 'These eight attainments are not for disenchantment, not the way to make an end of suffering, not for the realisation of the Four Noble Truths, not the way to Full Enlightenment.' So, thinking, 'Now is the time for me to seek for a path to Full Enlightenment by myself', he left his second teacher.

Now please keep in mind the point of view of the bodhisatta. What did he think? 'This is not the way to disenchantment, this is not the way to make an end of suffering, this is not the way to realise the Four Noble Truths, this is not the way to Full Enlightenment.'

Austerity Practice

What did the bodhisatta do after that? He decided to engage in practising austerities. How long did he strenuously practise austerities? For six years. What do you think? What would be the point of view of the bodhisatta at that time? Did the bodhisatta think that this would be the way to Full Enlightenment? For sure he thought, 'This will be the way to Full Enlightenment.' That is why he engaged in austerity practices. This was his point of view at that time; he was not yet a Fully Enlightened One at that time. His mind was covered with ignorance. Moreover, because his bad kamma came to fruition, he practised wrongly yet thought that he was practising correctly. Why did he practise austerities for six years?

The Brahmin Jotipāla's Unwholesome Kamma

Mistakenly thinking he was on the right path, the bodhisatta practised austerities for six years because he had accumulated unwholesome kamma during the time when the Kassapa Buddha had arisen in the world. In that existence, the bodhisatta was born into a Brahmin family. His name was Brahmin Jotipāla. As he was born in a Brahmin family, he did not have faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha.

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His intimate friend, Ghaṭikāra the potter, invited him to go and see the Kassapa Buddha.⁴

‘What is the use of going to see the bald-headed one?’ said Brahmin Jotipāla. He had no interest.

For another five times, Ghaṭikāra invited him repeatedly, saying, ‘My friend, it is good to go and see the Fully Enlightened Buddha. He is the teacher of humans, devas, and brahmās, and is respected by all of them.’

Eventually, to persuade his friend, Ghaṭikāra pulled on Jotipāla’s belt and said, ‘My friend, you should go.’ But Jotipāla refused again.

Finally, the potter Ghaṭikāra pulled the knot on Brahmin Jotipāla’s hair while urging him to approach the Kassapa Buddha.

Now Ghaṭikāra had been born into a family of lower caste. He was a potter. Brahmin families like Jotipāla’s were high caste.

Then the Brahmin Jotipāla felt frightened and thought, ‘Why would such a low-born person dare to take hold of the knot of my hair? There must be something about this Kassapa Buddha.’

The first time the potter Ghaṭikāra invited him, Jotipāla said, ‘What is the use of going to see such a bald-headed one? To be a Fully Enlightened One is a very difficult accomplishment. How could he be a

⁴ MN.II.4.1 Ghaṭikārasuttam (MN 81 The Discourse Concerning Ghaṭikāra).

The Brahmin Jotipāla's Unwholesome Kamma

Buddha?' He spoke the same way in the subsequent invitations. It was only when his friend of low-caste family finally dared to seize Jotipāla's hair knot and said while pulling his hair, 'Friend, we should go,' that he, because of his accumulated pāramī and because he was wise, decided to go and see the Kassapa Buddha.

When he had met the Kassapa Buddha and had heard the Dhamma, Jotipāla said to his friend, the potter Ghaṭikāra, 'How beautiful is the Dhamma! It is beautiful in the beginning! It is beautiful in the middle! It is beautiful in the end! Why haven't you made the decision to ordain? I will ordain!'

Do you know why the potter Ghaṭikāra could not decide to ordain? He was looking after his blind parents. He was also not an ordinary disciple of the Kassapa Buddha. He was an Anāgāmi, a Non-Returner, at that time. And because he had attained such deep Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge, he was brave enough to encourage someone else to go and see the Kassapa Buddha.

When the bodhisatta renounced the world in his last existence as Prince Siddhattha, he did not immediately meet with the right method to be a Fully Enlightened One because of the unwholesome verbal kamma he had accumulated in regard to the Kassapa Buddha. That unwholesome kamma would ripen in his last existence. So when he met his two teachers and could practise well under them, nevertheless his unwholesome kamma blocked him, so that he considered what was right to be wrong, and he didn't know how to proceed from there. More-

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over, he engaged in severe austerity practices for six years as a result of considering what was wrong to be right. In this way, when bad kamma ripens, we think that what is wrong is right, and what is right is wrong.

The Five Attendants

Do you remember the bodhisatta's attendants? There were five ascetics who were his attendants at that time. While the six lived and practised together, and the five ascetics saw the bodhisatta practising with such severe austerity for long periods, expectation would arise in the minds of those five, and they would think, 'Oh, the bodhisatta is going to be a Buddha very soon. Oh, the bodhisatta is going to become a Buddha today. Oh, the bodhisatta is going to become a Buddha tomorrow.' It was because his practice was so severe that they had such a point of view. The expectation arising from their point of view at that time was different from what it would become later on. Later, when the bodhisatta gave up these austerity practices after spending six long years at it, what did the five attendants do? They left the bodhisatta. When the bodhisatta gave up this wrong practice, the five attendants in turn gave up on the bodhisatta.

Now do you see? The points of view are different. The bodhisatta's point of view and the five ascetics' point of view differed at that time. Initially the bodhisatta thought that austerity practice was the right way, so he engaged in austere practices for six years. At that time the five attendants also thought

The Five Attendants

that this was the right way. They had great expectations that the bodhisatta was going to be a Buddha very soon. When the bodhisatta renounced austere practices, they also renounced the bodhisatta. In the Great Chronicle of the Buddhas (Mahābuddhavaṃsa), the Tipiṭakadhara Mahāthera Mingun Sayadaw records how the five attendants left the bodhisatta fifteen days before he attained Full Enlightenment. Do you remember the day the bodhisatta became the Enlightened One? It was on the full moon day of Vesākha. So the day the five attendants left the bodhisatta was fifteen days before his Full Enlightenment. It is mentioned in the Great Chronicle of the Buddhas by the Tipiṭakadhara Mahāthera of Myanmar.

What was their point of view when they left the bodhisatta? They thought, ‘Now the bodhisatta chooses the way to gain, and gives up the way to Full Enlightenment. If he chooses the way to gain, how can he become a Fully Enlightened One? Despite practising so severely for six years, he could not attain Buddhahood; in choosing the way to gain, how can he become a Buddha?’ Thinking like this, they left the bodhisatta. Now do you see? Before, they expected that the way the bodhisatta had chosen would lead him to Full Enlightenment; this was the expectation that derived from their point of view. In ancient times in the Majjhimadesa, or central India, people believed that someone who wants to attain Enlightenment must practise severe austerities, and that this is the only way to Enlightenment. So this was their point of view. Based on their point of view, their expectation arose. They left and abandoned the bodhisatta.

Expectation Derived from One's Own Point of View

If we want to know and see the true Dhamma, if we know what the true teaching of the Buddha is, and if we decide to follow the words of the Buddha, there may be those who won't accept our decision, there may be those who will complain about us, and there may be those who will find fault with us. At that time, we need to emulate the bodhisatta, and be determined on the path we should be following.

The Practice in the Sāla Forest

Now I want to share with all of you about the point of view of the bodhisatta after he gave up austerity practices. He went for alms and took a meal to make his body fresh and strong. What did he do then? There were fifteen days between the day his attendants left him and the day he became a Fully Enlightened One. So what did he do over the course of those fifteen days? How did he practise? Near the Nerañjara River in the sāla forest, he practised the eight attainments and the fourteen ways for the complete control of the mind, and he attained five kinds of supernatural power. This is explained in the sub-commentary (*ṭīkā*) Jinālaṅkāra, a long poem that relates the story of the Buddha and his prior existences. Again, what did he practise? The eight attainments. Previously he had thought that this was not the way to Full Enlightenment. He thought that this was not the way to disenchantment. He thought that this was not the way to make an end of suffering. Yes, it is true. Just attaining the eight attainments is not the way to disenchantment. Just attaining the eight attainments is not the way to make an end of suffering. And yes, it is true that just

The Practice in the Sāla Forest

attaining the eight attainments is not the way to become a Fully Enlightened One. But the eight attainments can serve as the foundation for the practice and the attainment of supernatural power. Previously his bad kamma had blocked him, so that he didn't know how to continue on from the eight attainments.

When kamma blocks us, we think that what is right is wrong, and what is wrong is right. This is very important. This is something you all need to reflect on in your own life and your own experience – how your point of view has changed, improved, and varied from time to time. You may have done many things wrong while thinking that they were right. You may have rejected many righteous things while thinking that they were wrong. Such things can happen when your bad kamma blocks you.

Now, although the bodhisatta had fulfilled pāramī for four incalculable and one hundred thousand eons, and although his last existence was as a bodhisatta destined to be a Buddha, he still thought that what was right was wrong, and what was wrong was right. Different points of view occurred in his mind, so his expectation varied accordingly.

What did he do in the sāla forest? He practised the eight attainments, he practised the fourteen ways, and then he attained five kinds of supernatural powers. He could practise these supernatural powers easily not because he had learned them from his two teachers, but because he had practised them many times in his past lives as a bodhisatta while he was fulfilling pāramī. Do you understand? You need to

understand this. It wasn't because of the guidance of those two teachers that he could practise and quickly attain; it was because he had practised in many of his past lives.

As you know, the bodhisatta attained supernatural powers in many of his previous lives even though he didn't have any teachers. Such was the pāramī that he accumulated over many lifetimes. But when his bad kamma blocked him, he had no idea how to go on from the eight attainments. When the blockage due to his bad kamma subsided, he knew how to continue on from where he was. How strange! Do you see? The five attendants differed from the bodhisatta in their point of view. They were not the same. They had different points of view.

The First Supernatural Power

What did the bodhisatta do on the full moon day of Vesākha? He approached the Bodhi Tree, and seated under the Bodhi Tree he practised mindfulness of breathing (ānāpānasati). He attained first, second, third, and fourth jhāna absorption concentrations, and then he practised one of the supernatural powers based on the eight attainments. So he used ānāpāna to attain all four material jhānas under the Bodhi Tree on the full moon day of Vesākha, and then he proceeded to practise meditation. Based on the eight attainments, he continued to practise one of the supernatural powers, the recollection of past lives – in Pāli, *pubbenivāsa-abhiññāna*. With this supernatural power, he could recollect many of his past lives. Now do

The First Supernatural Power

you see? When the blockage caused by his bad kamma had dissipated, he knew how to continue his meditation correctly, since he was destined to be a Buddha. When his kamma ripened, he knew how to continue by himself, without the aid of any other beings or any teachers, and solely by his own effort and understanding.

So with this supernatural power, he could know and see his past lives in detail. For each past life, he knew his name, he knew his clan, he knew where he lived, he knew his family, he knew his age when he died – he could recollect every detail of many of his past lives. Do you remember the life in which he received the definite prophecy from the Dīpaṅkara Buddha? It was four incalculable and one hundred thousand eons ago. He received the definite prophecy as the hermit Sumedha. He could recollect countless existences before that existence. He could recollect every detail. The Buddha declared that we have past existences. This declaration was not a product of His imagination; it was what He knew and saw by directly penetrating His past lives with supernatural power. Keep in mind that you have the opportunity to practise such supernatural power too. You have the same opportunity to know your past existences directly in every detail if you can attain such attainments. The Buddha taught the Dhamma not by imagining, but only by directly knowing. The Buddha said that the Dhamma has the quality of knowing for oneself – ‘Come and see, come and see.’⁵ You can do so even in this existence, even in

⁵ See DN.II.5 Janavasabhasuttaṃ (DN 18.27 The Discourse Concerning Janavasabha), among others: ‘*Svākkhāto bhagavatā*

this age, if you are willing, and if you really want to work for your own good. But your point of view must change, if it is not yet the right point of view. With this supernatural power, with *pubbenivāsa-abhiññāna*, he not only knew his many past lives in detail, but he also knew something which is more profound. He realised ultimate mentality and ultimate materiality with this supernatural power. What did he know and see with this supernatural power? He knew and saw ultimate mentality and materiality with this attainment. What is this knowledge? There are sixteen levels of insight knowledge. The first of these is *nāmarūpa-pariccheda-ñāna*, the knowledge of discerning ultimate mentality and materiality. So we can say that, in the first watch of the night, the Buddha attained the supernatural power of the recollection of the past; or we can say that he attained the first insight knowledge, the knowledge of discerning ultimate mentality and materiality. The latter is from the point of view of insight knowledge.

There are four Noble Truths. From the point of view of the Four Noble Truths, what did he realise in the first watch of the night? He realised the First Noble Truth. What is the First Noble Truth? It is the Truth of Suffering. What is suffering? '*Samkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā*' – 'In brief, the five clinging aggregates are suffering.'⁶ What are the five clinging aggregates? In brief, ultimate

dhammo sandiṭṭhiko akāliko ehipassiko opaneyyiko paccattam veditabbo viññūhi.'

⁶ SN.V.12.2.1 Dhammacakkappavattanasuttam (SN 56.11 The Discourse on Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dhamma).

The First Supernatural Power

mentality and ultimate materiality. They are the First Noble Truth. That is why we can say that, in the first watch of the night, the bodhisatta, not yet the Buddha, knew and saw the First Noble Truth.

The Second Supernatural Power

And then he continued with another supernatural power. He attained the second supernatural power in the second watch of the night. It is *dibbacakkhu-abhiññāna*, the divine eye supernatural power. With this attainment, he knew and saw beings who were dying. He knew and saw beings who were taking rebirth according to their good and bad kamma. Part of divine eye supernatural power is realising or attaining *yathākammūpaga-ñāna* – the knowledge of realising or knowing rebirth according to the law of kamma. In the second watch of the night, with the attainment of the supernatural power of the divine eye, he realised that good begets good and bad begets bad.⁷ He knew and saw the causes of rebirth

⁷ See MN.I.1.4 Bhayabheravasuttaṃ (MN 4 The Discourse on Fear and Dread):

So dibbena cakkhunā visuddhena atikkantamānusakena satte passāmi cavamāne upapajjamāne hīne paṇīte suvaṇṇe dubbhaṇṇe sugate duggate yathākammūpage satte pajānāmi – ‘ime vata bhonto sattā kāyaduccharitena samannāgatā vacīduccaritena samannāgatā manoduccharitena samannāgatā ariyānaṃ upavādakā micchādīṭṭhikā micchādīṭṭhikamma-samādānā; te kāyassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vinipātaṃ nīrayaṃ upapaṇṇā. ime vā pana bhonto sattā kāyasucaritena samannāgatā vacīsucaritena samannāgatā manoduccharitena samannāgatā ariyānaṃ anupavādakā sammādīṭṭhikā sammādīṭṭhikamma-samādānā; te kāyassa bhedaṃ paraṃ maraṇā sugatiṃ saggāṃ lokaṃ upapaṇṇā’i.

Expectation Derived from One's Own Point of View

in a good realm and the causes of rebirth in a bad realm. He knew and saw that there is no such thing as a creator of beings. They are created by their own kamma.

He knew and saw the law of kamma, not in his imagination but by direct knowledge. That's why the Buddha said, '*Taṃ kho paṇāhaṃ, bhikkhave, nāññassa samanassa vā brāhmaṇassa vā sutvā vadāmi, api ca yadeva sāmaṃ ñātaṃ sāmaṃ diṭṭhaṃ sāmaṃ viditaṃ tadevāhaṃ vadāmi*' – 'Bhikkhus, I tell you this not as something I heard from another recluse or Brahmin. I tell you this as something that I have actually known, seen, and discovered for myself.'⁸

This is what you too can know and see in this very life if you follow the words of the Buddha, and if you practise *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā* – the training of morality, the training of concentration, and the

With the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, I saw beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate. I understood how beings pass on according to their actions thus: 'These beings who were ill conducted in body, speech, and mind, revilers of Noble Ones, wrong in their views, giving effect to wrong view in their actions, on the dissolution of the body, after death, have reappeared in a state of deprivation, in a bad destination, in perdition, even in hell; but those beings who were well conducted in body, speech, and mind, not revilers of Noble Ones, right in their views, giving effect to Right View in their actions, on the dissolution of the body, after death, have reappeared in a good destination, even in the heavenly world.'

⁸ MN.III.3.10 Devadūtasuttaṃ (MN 130 The Discourse on the Divine Messengers).

The Second Supernatural Power

training of insight – systematically, step by step. In this respect we are very fortunate. Because of the arising of the Buddha in the world, and because the Buddha discovered the truth with His direct knowledge, we can learn, we can study, and we can practise the True Dhamma.

So with this supernatural power, the bodhisatta understood the law of kamma. From the point of view of insight knowledge, what did he attain? He attained *paccaya-pariggaha-ñāna* – the knowledge of discerning cause and effect. From the point of view of the Four Noble Truths, we can say that he knew and saw the Second Noble Truth, the Truth of the Origin of Suffering.

Insight Meditation

Let me ask you a question: What are the objects of insight meditation? *Nāma* (mentality) and *rūpa* (materiality), as well as causes and their effects. So the objects of insight meditation are the First Noble Truth – ultimate mentality and materiality – and the Second Noble Truth - causes and their effects. Keep this in mind.

I don't know what your point of view is. Before you heard this Dhamma, what was your point of view? Now do you see? The bodhisatta had realised the First Noble Truth – ultimate mentality and materiality – and the Second Noble Truth - causes and their effects – which are the objects of *vipassanā*, insight meditation. Only after that did the bodhisatta, the Buddha-to-be, practise insight

meditation, in the third watch of the night. Do you know about this? Have you ever heard about it? Yes, this is what you all need to understand. So the bodhisatta practised insight meditation step by step, starting with *sammasana-ñāṇa*. *Sammasana-ñāṇa* means Comprehension Knowledge, the knowledge of contemplating the general characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and non-self upon seeing the arising and perishing of ultimate mentality and materiality, along with their causes and their effects.

And then he continued with the subsequent levels of insight knowledge, beginning with *udayabbaya-ñāṇa*. What does *udayabbaya-ñāṇa* mean? *Udayabbaya-ñāṇa* is the contemplation knowledge of the arising and perishing of phenomena. It is developed in three stages: *samudaya-dhammānupassī*, *vaya-dhammānupassī*, and *samudaya-vaya-dhammānupassī*. *Samudaya-dhammānupassī* is the contemplation of the nature of the arising of phenomena. *Vaya-dhammānupassī* is the contemplation of the nature of their perishing. *Samudaya-vaya-dhammānupassī* is the contemplation of the nature of both the arising and perishing of phenomena. After that the bodhisatta continued with the next insight knowledge, *bhaṅga-ñāṇa*, Dissolution-Contemplation Knowledge, which emphasises just the perishing and ignores the arising, so that the bodhisatta contemplated impermanence, suffering, and non-self by observing just the perishing of ultimate mentality, materiality, causes, and their effects.

The Domain of the Bodhisatta's Insight Knowledge

Here you all need to understand the domain of the *vipassanā-ñāṇa*, the insight knowledge, of the bodhisatta. If we say the domain consists of just the objects of *vipassanā*, it is very simple. In that case, the domain consists of the First Noble Truth, which is ultimate mentality and materiality, and the Second Noble Truth, which is causes and their effects. But if we wish to explain in more detail, you all must understand what constitutes the domain of the *vipassanā-ñāṇa* of the bodhisatta.

There are three types of field. The Pāli word for 'field' is *khetta*. The three types of field are *jāti-khetta* (the field of birth), *ānā-khetta* (the field of authority), and *visaya-khetta* (the field of scope).

Are you familiar with the word 'jāti'? Every day you chant, '*Bhavaṇapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaṇaṃ soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassupāyāsā*'. So what is *jāti*? *Jāti* means 'birth'. *Jāti-khetta* refers to how the ten thousand world systems quaked and trembled at the time the bodhisatta was born. How many world systems quaked and trembled at that time? Yes, ten thousand world systems. This is *jāti-khetta*.

Next, what does *ānā-khetta* mean? This refers to the domain or the extent of the *vipassanā* objects contemplated by the bodhisatta. The objects of *vipassanā* are the First Noble Truth and the Second Noble Truth, which are ultimate mentality and materiality and causes and their effects. In his *vipassanā* practice the bodhisatta contemplated the ultimate

mentality and materiality existing in one hundred thousand crores of world systems.⁹ This is the *ānā-khetta*, the domain of authority, of the bodhisatta.¹⁰

So when the bodhisatta contemplated the true nature of those beings living in each universe and belonging to the three periods of time – past, present and future – he came to know full well that no matter how numerous devas, humans, and brahmās were in a single universe, they could be reduced to the twelve factors of *paṭicca-samuppāda*, the Doctrine of Dependent Origination.

Do you remember what the twelve factors of Dependent Origination are? They are:

- *avijjā* – ignorance
- *saṅkhārā* – volitional formations
- *viññāṇa* – consciousness
- *nāma-rūpa* – mentality-materiality

⁹ A crore is an Indian number denoting ten million. So here, the *ānā-khetta* (field of authority) is 1×10^{12} world systems.

¹⁰ Extracted from the Great Chronicle of the Buddhas (Mahā-buddhavaṃsa), page 324 (Singapore Edition). According to the Jinālaṅkāra and Pārājika commentaries, there are three fields (*khetta*) concerning a Buddha. First, there is *jāti-khetta*, the field of birth limited by the ten thousand world systems that quaked when the Perfect One's rebirth linking (conception) and other significant events occurred. Second is *ānā-khetta*, the field of authority, whose limits are the hundred thousand crores of world systems where the following safeguards (*parittā*) are efficacious: the Ratana Sutta, the Khandha Parittā, the Dhajagga Parittā, the Ātānātiya Parittā, and the Mora Parittā. The third is *visaya-khetta*, the field of scope, which is boundless and immeasurable, and in which the *Buddha-ñāṇa* (Buddha knowledge) can exercise *sabbaññutā-ñāṇa*, knowing anything anywhere that a Buddha wishes to know.

The Domain of the Bodhisatta's Insight Knowledge

- *salāyatana* – six bases
- *phassa* – contact
- *vedanā* – feeling
- *taṇhā* – craving
- *upādāna* – clinging
- *bhava* – becoming
- *jāti* – birth
- *jarā-marana-soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsā* – ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, suffering, grief, and despair

So the bodhisatta reduced all the conditional dhamma that existed in one universe to twelve factors of Dependent Origination. Then the bodhisatta contemplated impermanence, suffering and non-self upon seeing the arising and perishing of all these twelve factors in one universe, and in all the remaining world systems too.

Do you want to be a Buddha? If you want to be a Buddha, do remember that you need to contemplate all these dhamma in one hundred thousand crores of world systems. This must be the field of authority of your vipassanā, its necessary *ānā-khetta*.

Three Kinds of Bodhisatta

Here I want to share with all of you that anyone who aspires to be a Buddha must receive a definite prophecy from a living Buddha before the aspiration can become effectual. This prophecy is one of the important factors for becoming a Buddha. Only after that can such an aspirant be called a bodhisatta.

Expectation Derived from One's Own Point of View

And then he needs to fulfil pāramī for at least four incalculable and one hundred thousand eons to be a Buddha.

There are three kinds of bodhisatta: a *viriyādhika*, a *saddhādhika*, and a *paññādhika*. The duration that each type of bodhisatta needs to fulfil pāramī varies according to their inclination. A *viriyādhika*, in whom the dominant faculty is *virīya* (effort), will become a Buddha only after fulfilling pāramī for sixteen incalculable and one hundred thousand eons. A *saddhādhika*, in whom the dominant faculty is *saddha*, faith, will be a Buddha after fulfilling pāramī for eight incalculable and one hundred thousand eons. Our bodhisatta was a *paññādhika*; in this type, the dominant faculty is *paññā*, wisdom. A *paññādhika* becomes a Buddha after fulfilling pāramī for four incalculable and one hundred thousand eons. Which one do you want to be?

The above knowledge is not just the point of view of the Buddha. A point of view occurs in our minds regarding something we're not sure about. But this was true and clear vision that the Buddha attained. He had Omniscient Knowledge after He became fully enlightened. He shared this Dhamma with those who wanted to be a Buddha.

If you want to be a Buddha, you can be. You can make a choice to be a *viriyādhika*, a *saddhādhika*, or a *paññādhika*. And the Buddha explained the difference in the duration needed to fulfil pāramī among these three types of bodhisatta. So this is the vision of an omniscient Buddha, and not merely a point of view.

Three Kinds of Bodhisatta

When he was a bodhisatta, what he thought and what he assumed was just his point of view. But when he became a Buddha, He no longer merely held a point of view. He had attained to vision and direct knowledge – direct knowing and seeing. We don't call this a point of view anymore. It is direct knowledge acquired through the Omniscient Knowledge of the Buddha.

What do you think? Is it possible to be a Buddha just by listening to the Dhamma? Is it possible for someone else to make you a Buddha? What is your point of view? Do you want to go against the Buddha's teachings? These are things you need to consider.

There are two types of Buddha. One type is the *Sammāsambuddha*, a perfectly self-enlightened Buddha. Our Gotama Buddha was of this type. The other type of Buddha is a *Pacceka*buddha, a silent Buddha or a solitary Buddha. How much time do we need to spend fulfilling pāramī if we want to become a Paccekabuddha? Someone who wants to be a Paccekabuddha needs to fulfil pāramī for two incalculable and one hundred thousand eons.

Do you want to be a chief disciple of the Buddha? Do you know how long you need to fulfil pāramī to be a chief disciple? One incalculable and one hundred thousand eons.

In the time of the Buddha, there were many great disciples. Those who want to be great disciples of a Buddha need to fulfil pāramī for one hundred thousand eons.

Which one do you want to be? Do you want to be just an ordinary disciple? The duration required (how many existences) is not mentioned. Maybe you can make an end of suffering within two or three existences. However, if your aspiration is not strong enough, it may take more time. If you do not have any aspiration at all to make an end of suffering some day in the future, then you may still not be able to make an end of suffering even after the long duration of time needed for one bodhisatta to completely fulfil the necessary pāramī to be a Buddha. Why? Because you have not made any aspiration to be an ordinary disciple who can make an end of suffering as an Arahant.

Do you want to be an ordinary disciple? Being an ordinary disciple means to become an Arahant. What do you need to do to become an Arahant? You need to meditate. You need to develop concentration. The Buddha said that those who want to know and see the Dhamma as they really are, or those who want to know and see the Four Noble Truths as they really are, need to develop concentration. The Buddha said that this is the way to make an end of suffering.

All of you can make an end of suffering in this very life. If you develop concentration up to fourth jhāna, this concentration, this attainment, will enable you to know and see ultimate mentality and materiality, which is the First Noble Truth; causes and their effects, which is the Second Noble Truth; Nibbāna, which is the Third Noble Truth; and the Fourth Noble Truth, which is the way leading to the end of suffering. All these can be realised. It means that if

Three Kinds of Bodhisatta

you develop concentration in this very life, and if you practise diligently, spending enough time, practising under the guidance of a qualified teacher, you can attain first Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge in this very life. How great this is!

Now, I meet many among you who come into this existence with good *pāramī*, and who can practise well within a short time. So you should all engage in the practice of meditation. You should make use of the precious time you have in this life while the true teachings of the Buddha are available to us, and are still flourishing in the world.

Returning to the domain of the Buddha's insight knowledge, there are, as I have explained, one hundred thousand crores of world systems known as *ānā-khetta*, the domain of authority of the bodhisatta. When the bodhisatta contemplated the true nature of the beings living in each universe and belonging to the three periods of time – past, present, and future – he came to know full well that no matter how numerous were the humans, devas, and brahmās in a single universe, they could be reduced to twelve factors of *paṭicca-samuppāda*, Dependent Origination.

In the same way, when he contemplated the true nature of the devas, humans, and brahmās living in the remaining world systems, and belonging to the three periods of time – past, present, future – he came to know full well that, as in the case of the beings of this universe, the same twelve factors of *paṭicca-samuppāda* constitute the objects of *vipassanā* meditation.

So this was the domain of the bodhisatta for the realisation of the Dhamma and for the attainment of Full Enlightenment. The bodhisatta had contemplated to such a wide extent.

As he did so, his insight knowledges matured one after another. Do you know his final object, the one that enabled him to reach his goal? Is there anybody who knows what it was? What was the last object he used to contemplate impermanence, suffering, and non-self for his Enlightenment?

You may have a different point of view. If you lack right view on this matter, you may not be able to understand the way leading to Nibbāna. You may not be able to choose the right way either. You may wrongly keep in mind the mistaken words of teachers of later generations.

The Last Object for Insight Meditation Before Full Enlightenment

Now, let me share with all of you what the last object was that immediately preceded the bodhisatta's Enlightenment. The commentary to the Upakkilesa Sutta explains as follows:¹¹ When insight knowledge matured, the bodhisatta entered the first jhāna. It doesn't specify whether the jhāna was based on ānāpāna meditation or based on a kasiṇa meditation. It is not mentioned there. But many Mahātheras consider that it was based on ānāpāna meditation. So let's suppose it was based on

¹¹ See commentary to MN.III.3.8 Upakkilesasuttam (MN 128 The Discourse on Imperfections).

The Last Object for Insight Meditation
Before Full Enlightenment

ānāpāna meditation. The bodhisattva entered the first jhāna, and on emerging from first jhāna, he paid attention to the perishing of the first jhāna-dhamma, the thirty-four mental formations of the first jhāna. Observing the perishing of the first jhāna-dhamma, he contemplated impermanence, suffering, and non-self many times over and over, and his insight knowledge matured. Then the first Path Knowledge arose, followed by the first Fruition Knowledge.

Now you know the object he contemplated for first Path attainment. What was it? First jhāna-dhamma. Then he continued on to his second attainment. He entered the second jhāna. Emerging from the second jhāna, and observing the perishing of the second jhāna-dhamma, he contemplated impermanence, suffering, and non-self. Then when his insight knowledge matured, he attained second Path and Fruition Knowledges.

What does the first Path Knowledge remove? The first Path Knowledge removes personality view, doubt, and attachment to wrong practices.¹² The

¹² *Sīlabata-parāmāsa* in Pāḷi. It is the attachment driven by the wrong view that certain practices are necessary and sufficient for the attainment of purification. In ancient times, there were many ascetics and heretics who adopted the mode of practice of mimicking the habitual behaviour of dogs and cows, misguided by the wrong view that these practices would lead to purification. Nowadays, there are many seemingly Buddhist practices that are not true to the original teaching of the Buddha, which specifies that the Noble Eightfold Path in its entirety is the only practice that leads to purification. These pseudo-Buddhist practices can be considered as wrong practices (*sīlabata*). With the realisation of the first Path Knowledge, the

bodhisatta removed these three impurities completely without remainder. What does the second Path Knowledge remove? The second Path Knowledge does not remove any defilements. However, the defilements which are still strong in the Stream-Enterer are weakened by the second Path Knowledge. It lessens the power and the strength of the mind's impurities.

And then the bodhisatta continued and entered the third jhāna. Emerging from the third jhāna, he contemplated impermanence, suffering, and non-self, observing the perishing of the third jhāna-dhamma. When his insight knowledge matured, he attained the third Path and Fruition Knowledges. Can you tell me what the third Path Knowledge removes? Sensual desire and anger are removed completely, without remainder. Can you imagine how pure the mind of the bodhisatta was at that time? But he had not yet attained Full Enlightenment.

Then he continued on to the fourth Path and Fruition Knowledges by first entering the fourth jhāna. Emerging from the fourth jhāna, he practised by observing the perishing of the fourth jhāna-dhamma, and contemplated impermanence, suffering, and non-self repeatedly. When his insight knowledge matured, he attained the fourth Path and Fruition Knowledges associated with Omniscient Knowledge. He became a Fully Enlightened One.

Stream-Enterer knows with absolute certainty that no other practices outside of the Noble Eightfold Path lead to purification. Hence he has removed permanently and without remainder any attachment to wrong practices.

The Last Object for Insight Meditation
Before Full Enlightenment

Now do you see? How helpful the attainment of jhāna concentration is! The jhānas were very useful for the attainment of the Buddha's Enlightenment. Nowadays many people think jhāna concentration is not necessary. Almost all Buddhists these days have the point of view that Enlightenment is possible without jhāna absorption concentration, and even without developing any concentration whatsoever. I hope you don't have this point of view.

We need the strength of jhāna concentration. Without such power, it is difficult to defeat our defilements in the battle of vipassanā, because they have been deeply rooted in our mental continuum since the unknown and unknowable beginning of saṃsāra.

**The Defilements Removed By
The First Path Knowledge**

As we are talking about the removal of defilements, those that are removed by the first Path Knowledge should be further understood.

I will give you the Pāli words for three types of defilement: *anusaya kilesa*, *pariyuṭṭhāna kilesa*, and *vītikāma kilesa*.¹³ Have you heard of these before?

What is the type of defilement called *anusaya kilesa*? *Anusaya kilesa* are latent defilements. The defilements

¹³ *Anusaya kilesa* are the defilements that lie dormant as latent tendencies in the mental continuum, *pariyuṭṭhāna kilesa* are the defilements that obsess the mind, and *vītikāma kilesa* are the defilements that cause outright transgressions.

Expectation Derived from One's Own Point of View

that lie rooted in our mental continuum as latent tendencies are called *anusaya kilesa*. To make you understand clearly, I will explain a little bit more.

Let me do so by asking you a question. Are you angry with someone right now? Are you feeling angry now? Are you feeling proud of yourselves now? So right now you are not feeling angry; but do you have anger, do you have hatred? Where is it now? Can you show your anger to me? Can you touch it? Can you point it out to me? Where is it? Is it yours? No, it is not yours.

Path Knowledge removes these latent tendencies, these latent defilements. Things whose location you don't know, things you can't point out, things you can't touch have been removed by Path Knowledge.

Fire can destroy this world. Wind can destroy this world. Water can destroy this world too. But such powerful fire can't remove your latent defilements. Such powerful wind can't eradicate your latent defilements. Such powerful water can't destroy your latent defilements. Only Path Knowledge, which arises when your insight knowledge matures, can remove these latent defilements, step by step, from their roots, without any remainder.

As explained earlier, when you attain the first Path Knowledge, three impurities are eradicated without remainder. I will explain further. Which impurities are removed? *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi*, *vicikicchā*, and *sīlabbata-parāmāsa* – personality view, doubt, and attachment to wrong practices.

The Defilements Removed By
The First Path Knowledge

These three impurities have been completely removed from the root of your mental continuum without remainder. They will never arise again. Your mental continuum is utterly free from these three impurities.

Sakkāya-Diṭṭhi

When you are still an ordinary person, you may have the following wrong view: You grasp anger as yours, greed as yours, pride as yours, delusion as yours, jealousy as yours, and stinginess as yours. You do all this because of *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*, personality view. When you attain the first Path Knowledge, that personality view is completely removed. In attaining first Path Knowledge, you have completely removed this wrong view and also freed yourself from all degrees of defilements (*kilesa*) strong enough to lead to rebirth in the woeful planes. You don't regard anger as yours, greed as yours, pride as yours, delusion as yours, jealousy as yours, or stinginess as yours. Not anymore. Removing wrong view, you attain right view in this regard.

In the case of ordinary people, if they hear someone complaining about them, what happens to those people? They feel angry. So as an ordinary person in that situation, you feel very angry, because you think the anger is your anger. Right? Then you want to respond in some way, because you think, 'I am angry!' This view of 'I', this view of 'my', is strong enough to be the cause for falling into the four woeful states.

Expectation Derived from One's Own Point of View

When someone looks down on you, or if you are in a very high position, you are very proud of yourself. You think, 'I am! I am!' and mentally say to others, 'Do you know who I am?' This wrong view – I, I, my, my – is also strong enough to cause you to fall into the four woeful states.

Those who are *Sotāpanna*, Stream-Enterers, do not have this wrong view anymore. They still have anger since they haven't removed anger. They have greed since they have not removed greed. If someone complains about them, they may feel angry. But they do not regard anger as theirs. Is it good or not? How good it is! They don't participate in that wrong view. They see that anger tortures them. Their point of view has changed. How beautiful it is! Don't you want to be like that?

So here you all need to understand that anger, greed, delusion, pride, jealousy, stinginess, and doubt, all reinforced by *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*, personality view, cause you to suffer in the four woeful states. Because you consider defilements to be yours, you want to act according to that wrong view. You want to take revenge. You want to respond out of anger, out of pride, and out of jealousy and stinginess.

Someone who becomes a *Sotāpanna* is completely without any such wrong view. Stream-Enterers will not respond on the basis of regarding anger as their anger. The *Sotāpanna* sees what is happening, and thinks, 'Oh, anger comes up to the surface of the mind. Anger tortures me.' He doesn't grasp, he doesn't engage with the anger. So he will not commit either bodily or verbal actions that are very bad.

There may be bad mental actions that are very subtle. So his kamma will never cause him to fall into the four woeful states. This is because Stream-Enterers no longer have sakkāya-diṭṭhi. This is important for all of you to know if you want to be free from the suffering in the four woeful states.

Don't you want to remove sakkāya-diṭṭhi? It is very dangerous to have sakkāya-diṭṭhi. Unless you eradicate it, no one can guarantee that you are not going to fall into the four woeful states after this existence, nor can anyone guarantee that you are going to be reborn in a good realm. No one can give you any such guarantee.

The next impurity to consider is doubt (*vicikicchā*). One who attains the first Path Knowledge removes another impurity, namely, doubt. Whether one is doubtful about the Omniscient Knowledge of the Buddha, or doubtful about the Dhamma, or doubtful about the Order of the Noble Saṅgha, or doubtful about the three trainings, doubtful about past life, doubtful about future life, doubtful about past and future existences, or doubtful about the law of kamma – all these doubts are completely removed without remainder with the attainment of first Path Knowledge. You will have no such doubts anymore.

The first Path Knowledge also removes *sīlabbata-parāmāsa*, attachment to wrong practices. Your Path Knowledge has made you understand with absolute certainty that it is impossible to realise the Dhamma through other practices outside the Noble Eightfold Path.

Expectation Derived from One's Own Point of View

These three impurities are completely removed without remainder at the root by the first Path Knowledge.

I will explain giving an example. Suppose there is a rubbish bin full of rubbish, very heavy and very smelly. You open the cover and take some of the rubbish out. So now the bin is not as heavy or as smelly as before.

In the same way, the heart you were born with is very heavy and smelly. Do you know how heavy it is and how smelly it is? Very smelly, with the smell of the defilements, and very heavy. The defilements make you feel heavy every day. You carry the rubbish bin around from morning till night.

When you attain the first Path Knowledge, three impurities are removed. It's a bit like rubbish being removed from your rubbish bin. At that time, your heart is not as smelly as before, and not as heavy as before. It becomes lighter. How good it is! You are born again with a new heart inside your old body.

Is it good? Very good! Don't you want to remove these defilements? This is our first goal in practising meditation. If you have attained jhāna absorption concentration, you can expect to attain such deep attainments and remove such impurities from the root without remainder in this very existence. Now let's return to talk more about differences in expectation derived from differences in points of view.

Evidence of Supernatural Power

As I have told all of you, if we differ from one another in the knowledge we have acquired through learning, then our points of view and our standpoints will differ as well. If our points of view are different, the expectations derived from our points of view will be different too. I have explained to all of you how the bodhisatta practised near the Nerañjara River, in the sāla forest, when he had given up practising austerities after six years. Do you remember what he practised in the sāla forest? He practised the eight attainments and five kinds of supernatural powers. Based on the eight attainments, he practised in fourteen ways to train the mind, to make the mind pliable, and to proceed to the supernatural powers.

Do you accept that the bodhisatta practised the eight attainments? Do you accept that he could attain supernatural power within the fifteen days that followed his abandonment of the austerities he practised for six years? Do you accept the explanation of the sub-commentary Jinālaṅkāra? Do you have doubt about these things?

Yes, there may be those who feel doubtful about these things. There may be those whose point of view does not agree with them. I want to explain to all of you whether it is true that the bodhisatta successfully practised supernatural powers before he approached the Bodhi Tree for his Full Enlightenment. This is something you should consider. While the bodhisatta was sitting under the Bodhi Tree,

Māra and his army came and disturbed the bodhisatta. Do you remember?

What did the bodhisatta say to Māra at that time? He said, 'If I want, I can walk to and fro inside a mustard seed.'¹⁴ Are you familiar with mustard seeds? A mustard seed is very small. If he hadn't attained supernatural power, could he have spoken like that? This is one reason to lessen your doubt. Then the bodhisatta continued, 'If I want, I can cover the whole universe with my body.' If he hadn't attained supernatural power, could he have made a claim like that? This is the second reason to lessen your doubt. Then he said, 'Māra with your troops: If I wanted, I could destroy all of you by snapping my fingers. But I have not the slightest inclination to kill anyone.'¹⁵ That is why I will not destroy all of you in this way.' Without having attained supernatural power, could he speak like this? This is the third reason.

Another reason is that, when Māra told the bodhisatta, 'This is my invisible throne. Please leave here', the bodhisatta replied, 'Who is your witness, that you say this is your throne?' Then Māra said, 'There is no need to search far for any witness. All my army, they are my witnesses.' And all of Māra's troops, all the army soldiers, shouted, 'Yes, we are his witnesses, we are the witnesses.' So then the bodhisatta said, 'Māra, I have fulfilled pāramī for four incalculable and one hundred thousand eons. Over this long, long period, there is no charity which

¹⁴ See the Great Chronicle of the Buddhas (Mahābuddhavaṃsa), page 311 (Singapore Edition).

¹⁵ Same as previous, page 312.

I have not done, there is no morality which I have not practised. There are no austerity practices in which I have not engaged, over the whole very long period of four incalculable and one hundred thousand eons. Let alone the four incalculable and one hundred thousand eons – in even just a single one of my former existences as King Vessantara, when I offered great dāna seven times, culminating with the giving away of the queen Maddi, the lifeless earth trembled seven times. Why now does this earth remain still? I will take this earth as my witness.’ Then He pointed to the earth. The earth trembled so violently that Māra and his troops fled away in great fear.¹⁶

So how many reasons do you see? Four reasons. You heard how the bodhisatta spoke of the life in which he was King Vessantara. If he hadn’t attained supernatural power, could he talk about his past life? For these reasons, the explanation that appears in the sub-commentary Jinālaṅkāra is reasonable. In this way, too, the bodhisatta’s own point of view was not the same from one time to the next. As I have told all of you, when his bad kamma blocked him, he thought that the eight attainments were not the way to Full Enlightenment, not the way to make an end of suffering. Yes, as I have told all of you, just attaining the eight attainments is not enough to make an end of suffering. Only by contemplating and seeing the arising and perishing of the jhāna-dhamma of those eight attainments is it possible to make an end of suffering.

¹⁶ Same as previous.

That is why the point of view of the bodhisatta, when he was an ordinary being, was different from the point of view the Buddha had after He became a Buddha. 'Ordinary being' here means he was still a great being, but not yet a Noble One. So this was one of the points of view that the bodhisatta held, the very same point of view that changed in him when the time ripened.

Jhāna as Support for Full Enlightenment

I want to share with all of you the words of the Buddha in the Numerical Collection (in Pāli, the Aṅguttara Nikāya). There, in the Book of the Nines, you will find the Jhāna Sutta.¹⁷ What did the Buddha say in that sutta?

Paṭhamampāhaṃ, bhikkhave, jhānaṃ nissāya āsavānaṃ khayam vadāmi; dutiyampāhaṃ, bhikkhave, jhānaṃ nissāya āsavānaṃ khayam vadāmi; tatiyampāhaṃ, bhikkhave, jhānaṃ nissāya āsavānaṃ khayam vadāmi; catutthampāhaṃ, bhikkhave, jhānaṃ nissāya āsavānaṃ khayam vadāmi; akāsānañcāyatanampāhaṃ, bhikkhave, nissāya āsavānaṃ khayam vadāmi; viññāṇañcāyatanampāhaṃ, bhikkhave, nissāya āsavānaṃ khayam vadāmi; ākiñcaññāyatanampāhaṃ, bhikkhave, nissāya āsavānaṃ khayam vadāmi; nevasaññānāsaññāyatanampāhaṃ, bhikkhave, nissāya āsavānaṃ khayam vadāmi.

Bhikkhus, I say that the destruction of the taints (*āsavas*) occurs in dependence on the

¹⁷ AN.IX.1.4.5 Jhānasuttaṃ (AN 9.36 The Discourse on Jhāna).

Jhāna as Support for Full Enlightenment

first jhāna. I say that the destruction of the taints also occurs in dependence on the second jhāna. I say that the destruction of the taints also occurs in dependence on the third jhāna. I say that the destruction of the taints also occurs in dependence on the fourth jhāna. I say that the destruction of the taints also occurs in dependence on the base of boundless space.

Jhāna concentration with the base of boundless space as its object is the fifth attainment. This is the immaterial jhāna (*arūpa-jhāna*) that the bodhisatta learned under the guidance of Ālāra Kālāma. What did the bodhisatta say after he had mastered the immaterial jhāna of boundless space? He said, ‘It is not for the destruction of the taints; it is not the way to make an end of suffering.’ This was his point of view at that time. But after His Enlightenment, as the Buddha, what did He say? He said:

I say that the destruction of the taints also occurs in dependence on the base of boundless space.

And He continued:

I say that the destruction of the taints also occurs in dependence on the base of boundless consciousness.

This is the sixth attainment. He continued:

I say that the destruction of the taints also occurs in dependence on the base of nothingness.

Expectation Derived from One's Own Point of View

This is the seventh attainment. And finally He said:

I say that the destruction of the taints also occurs in dependence on the base of neither perception nor non-perception.

This is the eighth attainment. This eighth immaterial jhāna is what He had learned under the guidance of Udaka Rāmaputta. Do you remember?

So then, were the point of view of the bodhisatta and the point of view of the Buddha the same? No. Therefore, when we have no true understanding, our point of view will be different from what it will be when we attain right understanding. As a bodhisatta, he was destined to be a self-enlightened Buddha. He would definitely attain Enlightenment. He had the ability to attain Enlightenment by himself, unaided and unguided by anyone else. However, due to the ripening of his previous bad kamma, this ability for self-enlightenment was blocked. He didn't know how to take those eight attainments as the object of insight meditation when he practised under the two teachers.

I have earlier shared with all of you about the last meditation objects of the bodhisatta. What were they? First jhāna-dhamma for first Path and Fruition, second jhāna-dhamma for second Path and Fruition, third jhāna-dhamma for third Path and Fruition, and fourth jhāna-dhamma for fourth Path and Fruition. How did he practise these?

He entered the first jhāna, and on emerging from it, he contemplated, observing the perishing of the first

Jhāna as Support for Full Enlightenment

jhāna-dhamma. If you know how to contemplate all the first jhāna-dhamma, it will be for the destruction of the taints. In the same way, if you enter the first immaterial jhāna – in other words, if you enter the fifth attainment – and on emerging from it, if you pay attention to the perishing of the fifth jhāna-dhamma, contemplating impermanence, suffering, and non-self, it can be for the destruction of the taints. But the bodhisatta didn't know how to take the jhāna-dhamma as the objects of vipassanā. That is why there occurred at that time the point of view that this is not for the destruction of the taints, this is not the way to make an end of suffering, this is not the way to become a Buddha.

Subsequently, however, when the time ripened for the bodhisatta to take up the last meditation object that would enable him to attain Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge and Buddhahood, he practised vipassanā taking the jhāna-dhamma as object. Seeing the perishing of the jhāna-dhamma, and contemplating therein impermanence, suffering, and non-self, he attained successively the Path Knowledges and Fruition Knowledges one step after another. Before dawn, he attained Full Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree.

Going to Meet the Five Ascetics

After the bodhisatta had attained Full Enlightenment and become a Buddha, He spent seven days each in seven places – forty-nine days altogether. After that, He proceeded on His journey to the Isipatana Migadāya forest of Bārāṇasi.

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Why did the Buddha go there? To teach the Dhamma to the five ascetics who had been his attendants while he was engaged in austerity practices for six years.

What did the five ascetics do when they saw the Buddha approaching from a distance? They made an agreement among themselves, saying, 'Friends, the monk Gotama' – you see, they referred to Him not as 'the Buddha' but as 'the monk Gotama' – 'the monk Gotama is approaching. The monk Gotama has given up meditation practices. He has turned instead to striving for the acquisition of the four requisites. He has reverted to the acquisition of the four requisites. Let us not make obeisance to the monk Gotama. Let us not greet him. Let us not take the alms-bowl from his hands. However, we will prepare a seat for him to sit on if he wants.'

Aware of the mood of the five ascetics, the Buddha generated a loving-kindness that was directed especially to them (*odissaka mettā*). As the Buddha drew nearer and nearer, they were touched by the splendour and might of the Buddha (*buddhatejo ānubhāva*) and found themselves unable to keep the agreement they had made, so that all five of them went to welcome the Buddha. One took the alms-bowl from His hands, another prepared a seat for Him, another set out water, another placed a plank, and another brought a broken piece of pot to wash His feet with.

Do you remember the point of view of the five ascetics when the bodhisatta gave up practising austerities? What was their point of view then? They had this point of view: 'The monk Gotama has given up

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meditation practices. He has turned to striving for the acquisition of the four requisites. He practised severely for six years. Even though he practised such severe austerities for six years, he could not become a Buddha. Now he is going to strive for the acquisition of the four requisites. How can he be a Buddha?’ When the bodhisatta realised that austerity practices were not the way to Full Enlightenment, he gave up such wrong practices. At that time, the five ascetics took this point of view: ‘He will not become a Buddha because he has given up such severe practices.’ Holding this point of view, they themselves gave up on the bodhisatta.

Hence, a person’s expectations about a certain society, about a certain group, and about another person will be different according to that person’s point of view. How people have been educated since they were young, and the many ways they have been inculcated with the knowledge handed down from one generation to another, all create very different perceptions in people’s minds and strongly influence them in different ways. When the perceptions are different, the point of view will be different.

In the same way, the five ascetics had grown up in a place where almost everyone who renounced the world held that severe austerity practices were indispensable for the realisation of the Dhamma and for liberation. They strongly held that this was the only way to liberation. This was the result of the influence of their environment and education. That’s why the five ascetics held the same point of view at that time.

Perception

What is your perception? What perception do you hold? This is something we all need to consider deeply within ourselves. Here I want to ask you a question: Which is greater in this world, the number of people who hold wrong perceptions, or the number of people who hold right perceptions? Which group is more numerous – those who hold bad perceptions, or those who hold good perceptions?

In this regard, the Buddha said, 'Perception is dukkha.'¹⁸ The more bad perceptions we have, the more we suffer. In this modern era, people have a lot of bad perceptions because of the cultivation of sensuality in the world.

When you engage in meditation practice, you come to know very well how your perceptions torture you. Instead of meditating, you remember this, you remember that. What is the reason? The reason is your perceptions. Sometimes you remember someone who has done you wrong, so you become angry, and you suffer accordingly. The more bad perceptions you have, the more you suffer. Therefore, starting from today, we should study the teachings of the Buddha to have right perceptions, right understanding, and right knowledge for the realisation of the Dhamma.

¹⁸ SN.III.1.1.10 Kālattayadukkhassuttaṃ (SN 22.10 The Discourse on Suffering in the Three Times).

The Five Ascetics Hear the Dhamma

Now, when the Five Ascetics met the Buddha, they didn't know that the bodhisatta had attained Buddhahood. They still held the wrong point of view towards the Buddha. What did they do? When they met the Buddha, they spoke to Him as to an equal, addressing him by name as 'Gotama' and calling him '*āvuso*' (friend).

Then the Buddha said to the five ascetics, 'O ye five ascetics! Do not address me by name as "Gotama" or by the term "friend" as if I were your equal. I have become a truly Enlightened One who knows everything. I have realised Deathless Nibbāna (*Ama-ta Nibbāna*). I will instruct you. I will teach you the Dhamma. If you follow and practise in accordance with the instruction given by me, you will soon realise the Dhamma, even in this very life.'

But the group of five ascetics replied, 'Friend Gotama! Even though, in practising austerities for six long years, you practised and attained that which is difficult for ordinary individuals to achieve, nonetheless you still could not realise Omniscient Knowledge (*sabbaññutā-ñāṇa*). Having now given up your austerity practices, you strive for the acquisition of the four requisites. How could you have attained Omniscience while striving for the four requisites? How could you have attained Arahant Path and Fruition? How could you have attained Full Enlightenment?' Then the Buddha said to them, 'O ye five ascetics, previously, while I was practising severe austerities for six years in the Uruvelā forest, did you ever hear me say what I have now said to all of you,

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by way of encouraging you and to keep you from losing heart and to make you form a high opinion of myself, in declaring that I have attained Full Enlightenment?’

Only then did the Five Ascetics recall that time, and think, ‘Oh, while He practised severely for six years, had He told us, ‘I have become a Buddha’, we would have been quick to believe him.’ You see, their point of view at that time was very dangerous. Due to their wrong perception, they held a mistaken point of view. But after the Buddha spoke to them, they reasoned, ‘At that time this monk Gotama didn’t deceive us. Likewise now, He is speaking only of a quality He truly possesses.’ So only then were they ready to listen to the Buddha. Then the Buddha expounded His first discourse, the Dhammacakkavattana Sutta.

So now you all have heard the point of view of the bodhisatta and the point of view of the five ascetics. The point of view of the bodhisatta and the five ascetics were different. The five ascetics changed their point of view only after realising that their original point of view was erroneous.

Is there any point of view that has changed in your life? Is there any point of view that you thought was true but now you consider untrue? Do you still hold in your mind any point of view that regards what is wrong as right? Do you still hold in your mind any point of view that regards what is right as wrong?

In our lives, we each hold a certain point of view, and we keep on applying that point of view. We

can't give it up easily. Some of us do so until we die, not knowing that we are holding on to something wrong but thinking it is right. The main thing in life, the most important thing, is to know the right way to make an end of suffering. Nowadays, throughout the world, those who are interested in meditation practice are practising different methods, and those who are teaching meditation are teaching different methods.

Distinguishing Right Teaching From Wrong Teaching

Before the Buddha attained final Parinibbāna, He explained the criteria for distinguishing right teaching from wrong teaching. These criteria appear in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta.¹⁹ In this sutta the Buddha gives the bhikkhus advice on what they should do if a bhikkhu comes to them and expounds teachings that he asserts are genuine Dhamma and Vinaya and so are in accord with the Buddha's Dispensation, on the grounds that that bhikkhu has himself heard those teachings from respected and learned and accomplished bhikkhus and elders (*theras*) or even from the Buddha Himself. The Buddha advises the bhikkhus not to accept or reject such a bhikkhu's words outright, but rather to consider whether what he says agrees with the Dhamma and the Discipline – the Suttanta, the Abhidhamma, and the Vinaya. If his words agree with the teachings recorded in those places, then the bhikkhus should accept what he says as true. If his

¹⁹ DN.II.3 Mahāparinibbānasuttam (DN 16 The Discourse on the Great Parinibbāna).

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words do not agree with the Suttanta, the Abhidhamma, and the Vinaya, then that bhikkhu's words in that instance should be rejected as foreign to the Buddha's Dispensation. The Buddha advises the bhikkhus to act in this way even if the bhikkhu claims to be teaching something he has heard from the Buddha Himself.

Now please note well that in advising the bhikkhus here, the Buddha gives the example of a bhikkhu who says, 'What I am explaining to all of you is what I heard and what I received directly from the Buddha.' In other words, the Buddha mentions a bhikkhu who truly received teachings straight from the Buddha. However, the Buddha states clearly that even the teachings of such a bhikkhu should be compared against the teachings of the Buddha that have already been received. The advice I want to share with all of you is, don't be in a hurry to accept what I myself am explaining to all of you. Don't believe in Venerable Revata. Please compare what I teach with the teachings of the Buddha. Please accept my words only when you see that what I teach agrees with the teachings of the Buddha. Please don't depend on any person whatsoever. Please depend on the Dhamma.

What do you think? For the most part, what do people depend on? On the Dhamma, or on the person? People depend mostly on the person.

This is not the right way. I want all of you to depend only on the Dhamma, not on the person. In Pāli, the word for 'person' is '*puggala*'. Puggala is changeable. People are changeable. Sometimes they say

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something true, sometimes they say something untrue. Sometimes they speak according to their feelings and emotions. At a time when their mind is calm, and their mind is not driven by their ego, they say what is true. However, sometimes people speak wrongly out of dislike. Sometimes they say something wrong because they are moved by preferences, greed, and desire. People, puggalas, are strongly determined by their likes and dislikes. By contrast, Dhamma is unchanging; it is true at all times, and never poisons you.

A person, however, can poison you. If I am not telling the truth, if what I say is not Dhamma, it will poison you. Throughout my life, from a young age, I have never wanted to depend on anyone else. Why? This is my reasoning: Humans are changeable; they change according to their likes and dislikes, according to their defilements. Therefore I focus mainly on what is reliable, such as the truth, such as Dhamma.

I share this advice with all of you: Please don't depend on Venerable Revata. However, if he speaks according to the Dhamma, please depend on that Dhamma. Why? Because the Dhamma never changes, and it never poisons, never harms, never disturbs, never destroys you, but always benefits you. That is why I keep speaking the Dhamma. I love the Dhamma. I love sharing the Dhamma with all of you.

You have already seen by now that the point of view of the bodhisatta and the point of view of the Buddha were not the same.

Attainment of Sukha with Sukha

Another thing I want to share with all of you: Nowadays teachers in many countries, in many centres teaching the Dhamma, instruct the meditators to pay attention to the pain arising in the body and to observe it, labelling it as 'pain... pain...pain'. I believe all of you have practised this way in the past. I have also practised in this way. I tried until I overcame the pain.

Once, the Prince Bodhirājakumāra approached the Buddha. The prince explained his view of sukha (happiness) to the Buddha. Do you want to hear his words in Pāli? *'Mayham kho, bhante, evam hoti: Na kho sukkena sukham adhigantabbam, dukkhena kho sukham adhigantabbam'* – 'Lord, I have this point of view: We cannot attain *sukha* (happiness) by means of sukha. We can attain sukha only by means of dukkha.'²⁰ This was Prince Bodhirājakumāra's point of view.

Do you agree with his words? What is your point of view? I think you are thinking that this is a very strange talk. Yes, I want to take something strange and make it 'un-strange'. I want to make what appears strange become simple and familiar to you. I want some of the strange points of view which you hold in your mind to be rectified by your hearing of this Dhamma.

For a long time, maybe throughout our whole life, the way we have practised meditation has accumulated dukkha instead of sukha for us. Now this

²⁰ MN.II.4.5 Bodhirājakumārasuttaṃ (MN 85 The Discourse Concerning Prince Bodhi).

was the point of view of Bodhirājakumāra. When he expressed his point of view to the Buddha, what did the Buddha say? He said, ‘*Mayhampi kho, Rājakumāra, pubbeva sambodhā anabhisambuddhassa bodhisattasseva sato etadahosi – na kho sukkena sukham adhigantabbam, dukkhena kho sukham adhigantabban.*’ What does it mean? It means, ‘When I was still a bodhisatta, I had the same point of view as you have – that we can attain sukha only by means of dukkha, and we can’t attain sukha by means of sukha.’ This was the point of view of the unenlightened bodhisatta, which was the same as Bodhirājakumāra’s point of view. But the Buddha continued to explain the understanding He had acquired through the attainment of Buddhahood. As an unenlightened bodhisatta, he thought that he couldn’t attain sukha by means of sukha. He thought he could attain sukha only by means of dukkha. That was why he engaged in austerity practices for six years. He thought he could attain sukha by means of dukkha.

Bodhirājakumāra’s view was that we cannot attain sukha with sukha. What did he mean? What was his point of view in saying, ‘We can’t attain sukha by means of sukha’? The sukha he refers to is *kāma sukha*, sensual happiness. Bodhirājakumāra meant that sensual happiness cannot be the means to attain supramundane Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge, which is real happiness.

The bodhisatta had held the same view. But in becoming a Fully Enlightened Buddha, His understanding was transformed. The point of view of the Enlightened One was that, first, it is indeed true that sensual pleasure cannot be the means to

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Magga Sukha and *Phala Sukha*, the happiness of Path and Fruition. Secondly, it is likewise true that severe austerity practice is not the way to such supra-mundane sukha. Thirdly, however, by means of *jhāna sukha*, the pleasure and happiness of absorption concentration, one can indeed attain *Magga Sukha* and *Phala Sukha*. Such was the vision of the Fully Enlightened Buddha. Hence, the point of view of the bodhisatta and the vision of the Buddha were completely different.

Nowadays, in my own case and in the case of all of you too, we have practised many different meditation methods. Sometimes, or even many times, we have spent our sitting time with our attention completely engrossed in severe physical pain. Right? This is practising with dukkha. Do you think you can attain sukha that way? This is something we need to avoid.

The Buddha taught the Middle Way, the *Majjhima Paṭipadā*. It avoids the extreme of *kāma-sukhallikānuyoga* (indulgence in sensual pleasures) on the one hand and the extreme of *attakilamathānuyoga* (self-mortification) on the other. These are two undesirable and unbeneficial extremes. We need to avoid them.

Now you see that the point of view of the bodhisatta was completely different from the point of view of the Buddha. One who is fully enlightened and one who is not enlightened, how can they have the same point of view?

Attainment of Sukha with Sukha

Your point of view now as an ordinary person is one thing, but your point of view when you become a Noble One will be something else. Don't you want to see these changes? This is very important! Your point of view as an ordinary person is one thing, but your point of view as a Noble One will be something else altogether. Dhamma changes you. Dhamma improves you. Dhamma transforms you into another person. You were born with an old heart. When you become a Noble One, your heart will be otherwise. You will be a newly born person with an old body but with a new heart. Is it good? Very good!

Your point of view will change at that time. Dhamma is the power that can change you. Dhamma is so powerful! But you must know the true Dhamma, not some counterfeit Dhamma. What did the Buddha say? 'As long as counterfeit gold doesn't appear in the world, genuine gold will remain in the world. When counterfeit gold appears in the world, then genuine gold will disappear from the world. In the same way, the true Dhamma will not disappear as long as a counterfeit of the true Dhamma has not arisen in the world. But when counterfeit dhamma appears in the world, the true Dhamma will disappear.'²¹

One day this world will be destroyed. The destruction of worlds occurs sometimes by water, sometimes by fire, sometimes by wind. Water, fire, and wind are so powerful that they can destroy the entire mass of this world. But even though water,

²¹ SN.II.5.13 Saddhammapatirupakasuttam (SN 16.13 The Discourse on the Counterfeit of the True Dhamma).

fire, and wind are so powerful that they can destroy this world, they can't destroy the teachings of the Buddha. According to the Buddha, only a 'useless person' – in Pāli, *moghapurisa* – can effect the destruction of the teachings of the Buddha.²² By the term 'useless person', or *moghapurisa*, the Buddha didn't mean any lay devotee. By 'moghapurisa' the Buddha meant bhikkhus who don't speak the truth, who teach counterfeit Dhamma. It is bhikkhus of this sort who will destroy the teachings of the Buddha. No one can destroy the Dhamma except those who are ordained, because it is they who are responsible for imparting the Dhamma. If they fail to impart the true Dhamma, they will end up destroying the teachings of the Buddha.

In the same way, if you don't know the true Dhamma, you will spread whatever teachings you know and whatever you consider to be true. You yourself will be involved in spreading untrue teachings, and so you too will be involved in destroying the teachings of the Buddha. That is why you all should know the true Dhamma, not counterfeit dhamma.

Now I am sharing the true Dhamma with all of you, but as I have said, I am brave enough to invite all of you to check what I have shared and compare it with the teachings of the Buddha. Please accept it only when you see that it agrees with the Buddha's teaching.

²² Same as previous.

The Two Types of Insight Practitioners

Another thing that meditation teachers in many countries teach nowadays is that it is possible to make an end of suffering without having developed concentration. Do you agree with this idea? Even in Myanmar, where the Dhamma seems to be flourishing, there are many who hold this point of view and who teach that there is no need to develop concentration.

What did the Buddha teach after His complete Enlightenment? ‘*Samādhiṃ, bhikkhave, bhāvētha. Samāhito, bhikkhave, bhikkhu yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*’ – ‘Bhikkhus, develop concentration. One who is concentrated knows and sees things as they really are.’²³ Who said this? The Buddha. What did the Buddha say? He said that one who is concentrated knows and sees the Dhamma, the Truths, as they really are. And the Buddha continued: ‘*Kiñca yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti? Idaṃ dukkhaṃ’ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*’ – ‘What does he know and see as it really is? He knows and sees as it really is, “This is suffering.”’ In other words, the Buddha said that one who is concentrated will know and see the First Noble Truth. And the Buddha continued, saying that one who is concentrated will know and see the Second Noble Truth, and the Third Noble Truth, and the Fourth Noble Truth. If you have a different point of view, please change it so that it is in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha. Keep in mind that, without having developed concentration, no one can

²³ SN.V.12.1.1 Samādhisuttaṃ (SN 56.1 The Discourse on Concentration).

penetrate the Dhamma, the truth of things as they really are.

If it is true that concentration is indispensable, the following thought may have occurred to you: Isn't it true that in the Buddha's time there were some who practised insight meditation without having developed concentration first? Do you have such an idea? I believe you have.

Yes, there have been two kinds of practitioners ever since the time of the Buddha. They are called *samathayānika* and *suddhavipassanāyānika* in Pāli. 'Samathayānika' means someone who practises insight meditation after having developed jhāna concentration. 'Suddhavipassanāyānika' means someone who practises pure insight. Have you ever heard of these? Someone who practises insight meditation after having developed concentration is a samathayānika, and someone who practises insight meditation directly is called a pure insight meditator. Which one do you want to be? Which are you? Are you someone who practises insight meditation after having developed concentration? Are you someone who wants to be a pure insight practitioner? I want to share something with all of you that will enable you to decide which type of practitioner you would like to be.

What is the comparison between someone who practises insight meditation after having developed concentration and someone who is a pure insight meditator? What are the similarities? What are the differences? You need to know both the similarities and the differences. So I want to explain about the

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first type of person, the one who practises insight meditation after having developed concentration. How does such a meditator practise?

First, what is the way leading to Nibbāna? The way leading to Nibbāna is the Noble Eightfold Path. If we summarise the Noble Eightfold Path, it would be just three trainings – the training of morality, the training of concentration, and the training of insight. As I am going to explain these two types of practitioners, I need to explain these three trainings.

You all know about the first training, the training of morality. I will not say much about this. The second training is the training of concentration. When the Buddha taught the second training, the training of concentration, how many meditation objects did He teach? He taught forty different samatha meditation objects. Of these forty objects, there are thirty that can take the meditator all the way to jhāna absorption concentration, while the remaining ten can lead one only as far as access concentration. Access concentration is very close to jhāna absorption concentration.

So we can classify these forty meditation objects into two kinds, according to whether they can be used for absorption concentration or just access concentration. Those who want to be samathayānika -- serenity and insight practitioners, who practise insight meditation after having developed concentration – must develop jhāna absorption concentration, by practising one of the thirty meditation objects that can take meditators to jhāna absorption concentration.

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After having attained jhāna absorption concentration, the meditator proceeds to the practice of insight meditation. This is the way a 'serenity and insight practitioner' practises. If you want to be a pure insight practitioner, you don't need to develop any jhāna absorption concentration. You need to start insight meditation directly.

So when the Buddha taught samatha meditation, He taught forty samatha meditation objects. Since this is so, let me ask you one question: When the Buddha taught vipassanā – insight meditation -- how many meditation objects did He teach? You are thinking, 'We came to learn the Dhamma, Bhante; why are you asking us so many questions?' Since you asked a lot of questions when you were in school, let me now put many questions to you. When the Buddha taught the third training, the training of insight meditation, how many meditation objects did He teach? He taught two. What are they? Rūpa and nāma meditation, materiality and mentality meditation. When the Buddha taught vipassanā, He taught only these two meditation objects. If you want to be a pure insight meditator, there is no other choice: You must take rūpa meditation as your starting point.

If you want to be a pure insight practitioner, you can't start nāma meditation directly. What is the reason? Unless you have attained jhāna absorption concentration, you haven't yet known or seen jhāna factors. Therefore you can't discern mentality directly when you are going to practise pure vipassanā. That is why you don't have any choice;

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you must start with rūpa meditation. This is the starting point for a pure insight practitioner.

Another question might occur to you here, namely: How does one start rūpa meditation? I will answer this by citing the commentary to the Mahāsati-*paṭṭhāna Sutta*, the Great Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness. In the commentary to the *vedānānupassanā* section (the section on contemplation of feeling) of this sutta, the following explanation appears: ‘*Duvidhañhi kammaṭṭhānaṃ rūpakammaṭṭhānañca arūpakammaṭṭhānañca. Rūpapariggaho arūpapariggahotiṭi etadeva vuccati. tattha bhagavā rūpakammaṭṭhānaṃ kathento sañkhepamanasikāravasena vā vitthāramanasikāravasena vā catudhātuvaṅvatthānaṃ kathesi.*’²⁴ When the Buddha taught vipassanā, He taught two types of meditation: materiality meditation (*rūpakammaṭṭhānaṃ*) and mentality meditation (*nāmakammaṭṭhānaṃ*, which is another term for *arūpakammaṭṭhānaṃ*). When the Buddha taught rūpa meditation, He taught four elements meditation, with both a brief method and a detailed method. Among the forty types of samatha meditation, one type is four elements meditation. Four elements meditation qualifies as both samatha and vipassanā. So when the Buddha taught vipassanā, He taught four elements meditation in both a brief method and a detailed method as the starting point of rūpa meditation.

So if you want to be a pure insight practitioner, you must undertake four elements meditation. You may have been a pure insight meditator for some time in

²⁴ See commentary to MN.I.1.10 Mahāsati-*paṭṭhānasuttaṃ* (MN 10 The Great Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness)

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your life. When you thought you were a pure insight meditator, did you practise four elements meditation? I believe you have been or thought you were a pure insight meditator at some time in this very life. And yes, I thought of myself that way, too. I thought I was a pure insight practitioner before.

We have never been taught four elements meditation according to what appears in the commentary. That is why our point of view at that time was different from now. At that time we thought, 'This is right.' We considered what is wrong as right. Now we know the explanation in the commentary, where it says that when we are going to practise vipassanā directly as a pure insight meditator, we need to discern four elements. When the Buddha taught four elements meditation, He taught earth, water, fire, and wind elements. In the earth element, there are six characteristics – hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness, and lightness. In the water element, there are two characteristics – flowing and cohesion. In the fire element, the characteristics are heat and cold. In the wind element, they are pushing and supporting. There are twelve characteristics altogether. You need to discern these systematically.

Now you know how to start insight meditation directly as a pure insight practitioner. So if you want to practise insight meditation after having developed concentration, you first need to develop jhāna absorption concentration. After having developed jhāna absorption concentration, you continue on to the practice of four elements meditation, as rūpa

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meditation. So what is the similarity and what is the difference between the two types of practitioners?

The difference is that the pure insight practitioner has no jhāna absorption concentration, but the other type of practitioner practises insight meditation after having developed absorption concentration first. But when they start vipassanā, are they the same or different? They are the same. The only difference is with regard to jhāna absorption concentration – one attains it beforehand and the other does not. But when they undertake insight meditation, both need to start with four elements meditation.

I would like to explain further. Those who have developed absorption concentration have another option for starting insight meditation. If they want to start with nāma meditation rather than rūpa meditation, they have the capability to do so. Why? They have attained jhāna absorption concentration, so they know how to discern the jhāna factors; therefore they are able to discern the jhāna-dhamma for nāma meditation. In the first jhāna, there are thirty-four mental formations. So they can discern those, and can take nāma as the starting point of their vipassanā. Or they can start with rūpa meditation. That is why they have two options. However, for beings in the realms of the five aggregates, mentality arises depending on materiality. According to the Visuddhimagga, those who want to discern mentality must first have thoroughly discerned ultimate materiality. For this reason, even though the samathayānika have two options, starting with four elements meditation is the better choice when they undertake insight

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meditation. *Suddhavipassanāyānika* have no other choice but to start with four elements meditation. So they are both the same when they start insight meditation. The starting point of *vipassanā* is the same for both, that is, four elements meditation.

Let me ask you another question. Suppose you want to cross a river or the sea. You could cross a river or the sea with a ship – this is one option. Another option is to make the crossing by swimming. Which do you prefer? Crossing in a ship, for sure! How tiring it would be and how hard to cross by swimming! So practising pure insight is very much like crossing the sea of *samsāra* by swimming, whereas practising insight meditation after having developed concentration is like crossing the sea of *samsāra* in a ship. Very peaceful.

Indeed, I have been teaching locals and foreigners for more than thirteen years. I have witnessed the difference between these two types of practitioners. In general, those who practise insight meditation after having developed concentration feel very good. They feel at ease, they feel *sukha*. Those who directly practise insight meditation without any absorption concentration must start straightaway with four elements meditation. Generally speaking, most of them encounter difficulty. As I have told all of you, this is a general observation. But it is different for those who have practised four elements meditation successfully in a past life. They can practise four elements meditation successfully within a short time. So it is that, generally speaking, pure insight practitioners encounter hardship in their practice, but those who have developed absorption

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concentration can practise four elements meditation with ease, without any difficulty, within a short time, and with success.

But if you want to be a pure insight practitioner, I will not find fault with you. I will teach you. If you have accumulated pāramī by practising four elements meditation in the past, I should teach you, because it will be easier for you. But you will know what meditation object you practised with in the past only when I teach you, and only when you actually practise. Only at that time will I know, and you as well. If you are successful with ānāpāna meditation within a short time, we can say that you may have practised with this successfully in your past. If you can practise four elements meditation successfully within a short time, for sure you practised four elements meditation in your past, too.

Therefore, when we are meditating, we should keep this thought in mind: ‘If we have come into this existence with enough pāramī, we will attain the highest attainment after following the true teachings of the Buddha.’ If you don’t follow the true teachings of the Buddha, what you have fulfilled in the past will not work, and does not come to fruition.

Why not? The way leading to Nibbāna became known when the Buddha appeared in the world. If you don’t follow the way the Buddha taught, how can you realise the Dhamma as they really are? Even though you may have practised in your past, you still must follow what the Buddha taught in this very life. Suppose you have come into this existence without

enough pāramī; if you get the opportunity to practise the true teachings of the Buddha in this life, you are fulfilling the pāramī for your realisation in the future. Therefore, the most important thing is to practise the true teachings of the Buddha, not counterfeit dhamma.

The Vipassanā Battle

So we are talking about the Buddha's advice that sukha cannot be attained with dukkha; sukha can be attained only with sukha. What is your point of view on this?

In a practical sense, while striving along the way and seeking the Dhamma by practising meditation, we have paid attention to dukkha as a meditation object with the expectation that we can realise the Dhamma just by paying attention to the dukkha, the feelings of pain and discomfort, that appears in the body. This is what all of us have done in the past. Do you agree with this? If you go on like this for a long time, in the end you will find no happiness in your meditation practice. You will encounter only dukkha, so what will you do in the end? You will grow afraid of practising meditation; you will want to give up practising meditation. You won't be able to continue because meditation gives you so much dukkha and no sukha. So when the Buddha says, 'Sukha can't be attained with dukkha; sukha can be attained only with sukha', what does He really mean?

The Vipassanā Battle

In the case of the samathayānika, who practise insight meditation after having attained jhāna absorption concentration, they can enter absorption concentration and remain there without any pain or discomfort in their body continuously for one hour, two hours, even three hours. Why? Because, on account of the absorption concentration, they feel sukha for the whole sitting according to the masteries they have practised. Based on absorption concentration, they continue on to practise insight meditation. So I will briefly explain this to all of you. After having developed concentration, as the Buddha said, one who is concentrated knows and sees the Truths as they really are.

Such a meditator will know and see the First Noble Truth, which is ultimate mentality and ultimate materiality, and the Second Noble Truth, which is causes and their effects. After having realised these two Noble Truths, one can start insight meditation. When you are going to start insight meditation, you need to proceed step by step.

First you need to pay attention to the arising and perishing phenomena of the First Noble Truth and the Second Noble Truth. Then you must contemplate them as impermanence, suffering, and non-self. When your insight knowledge matures, you must continue on to *udayabbaya-ñāṇa*, the insight knowledge that focuses on the arising and perishing of phenomena. By doing so your insight knowledge will mature. Then you must proceed to *bhaṅga-ñāṇa* – emphasising the perishing while ignoring the arising – and you will see phenomena rapidly perishing all the time. Whether you are doing

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walking meditation or sitting meditation or standing meditation or are meditating while lying down, you go on observing the constant, rapid perishing. While your insight knowledge has not yet matured and is not yet strong enough to realise Nibbāna, you will feel tired, not physically but mentally, because you are seeing the constant perishing of phenomena.

What did the Buddha advise His disciples to do when they encounter this? He advised them to enter absorption concentration. According to the Buddha's advice, if your insight knowledge is not yet mature, you will feel tiredness mentally because you are constantly seeing phenomena rapidly perishing all the time. You are like a soldier fighting his enemies. As he has been fighting with those enemies for a long time, he will feel tired and hungry and will not have enough bodily energy to continue; so he should withdraw to the fortress and rest, he should take food and make his body fresh and strong again. When he feels fresh and strong, he comes out of the fortress and fights his enemies again.²⁵

In the same way, when you practise insight meditation according to the teachings of the Buddha, you will come to see the extremely rapid and continuous perishing of conditioned dhammas all the time. It's as if you're in a vipassanā battle; at some point you will feel tired and will need to replenish your energy. The Buddha advises you to please enter your 'fortress' at that time. Please enter absorption concentration and take a rest there, and

²⁵ Commentary to MN.I.2.9 Dvedhāvitakkasuttaṃ (MN 19 The Discourse on Two Kinds of Thought).

The Vipassanā Battle

make yourself feel fresh and strong again. When you feel mentally fresh and strong you must return to fight your enemy. You must emerge from your jhāna fortress. You must continue your vipassanā battle.

So in this way there is no physical dukkha nor is there any mental dukkha. There is just mental tiredness that needs to be counter-balanced, because insight knowledge is not yet strong enough. And because insight knowledge isn't strong enough, it's not yet possible to break through to realise Nibbāna. However, in practising in this way, according to necessity and to conditions, there is no dukkha. There is only sukha. In this way, the practitioner must spend a long time striving to attain Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge. Without concentration, how will you be able to spend a lot of time at this, the way you need to? Without concentration, you will encounter nothing but a great deal of dukkha, and then you may decide that it's better just to go back home.

That is why you can't attain sukha by means of dukkha, and can attain sukha only by means of sukha. This is the point of view you should have; if you don't have this point of view in your life, then from today onwards, please adopt and hold this point of view and listen to the words of the Buddha and practise accordingly. Only then can you expect to realise Nibbāna by attaining Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge. This is one of the points of view that I want to make clear to all of you.

The Four Types of Persons

There are also some teachers who maintain that it is possible to realise Nibbāna just by hearing the Dhamma. They insist there is no need to practise meditation. They claim that during the Buddha's time, there were some who became Arahants just by hearing the Dhamma. Is it true that there were some who could realise the Dhamma just by hearing it? Yes, it is true.

The Buddha taught that there are four types of persons.²⁶ The first type, the *ugghaṭitaññū*, can attain

²⁶ The four types are recorded in AN.IV.4.3 *Ugghaṭitaññū-suttam* (AN 4.133 The Discourse on One of Quick Understanding). Explanations here are taken from *Puggalapaññatti* and its commentary (extracted and translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi):

- (a) *Ugghaṭitaññū* – The person of quick understanding is one for whom the breakthrough to the Dhamma (*dhammābhisamaya*) occurs together with an utterance. *Ugghaṭita* means the opening up of knowledge (*ñāṇugghāṭana*); the meaning is that one knows as soon as knowledge opens up, together with an utterance, or as soon as [a statement on Dhamma] is uttered. The breakthrough occurs together with knowledge of the Dhamma of the Four Truths.
- (b) *Vipaṅcitaññū* – The person who understands through elaboration is one for whom the breakthrough to the Dhamma occurs when the meaning of what has been stated briefly is being analysed in detail. This is the person able to attain Arahantship when, after a concise outline of the teaching has been set up, the meaning is being analysed in detail.
- (c) *Neyya* – The person to be guided is one for whom the breakthrough to the Dhamma occurs gradu-

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Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge just by hearing a very short stanza. Do you remember the two chief disciples who became Sotāpanna after hearing a very short stanza from the Venerable As-saji? Do you want to hear that stanza? Do you want to test whether you can attain Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge? Then listen:

*Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā,
Tesam hetum tathāgato āha.*²⁷

Is there anybody who has attained Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge? Nobody? You may say, ‘Bhante, leave aside the attainment of Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge; we don’t even understand what it means!’ Yet as for the two chief disciples, both of them became Sotāpanna before the stanza had even reached the word ‘āha’.

ally, through instruction, questioning, careful attention, and reliance on good friends.

- (d) *Padaparama* – One for whom the word is the maximum is one who – though hearing much, reciting much, retaining much in mind, and teaching much – does not reach the breakthrough to the Dhamma in that life.

²⁷ The full stanza from Therāpadānapāli, Ap.1.I.3-1 (Apadāna) Stanza 286:

*Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā,
Tesam hetum tathāgato āha,
Tesañca yo nirodho,
Evaṃvādī mahāsamaṇo.*

Translation into English by Nyanaponika Thera:

Of those things that arise from a cause,
The Tathāgata has told the cause,
And also what their cessation is;
This is the doctrine of the Great Recluse.

Why? Because they had fulfilled *pāramī* for one incalculable and one hundred thousand eons in the round of rebirths. They had developed deep concentration in many existences. Based on deep concentration and supernatural powers, they had practised *vipassanā* and contemplated impermanence, suffering, and non-self many times in many existences, and had attained up to the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*). However, because of their great aspiration to be chief disciples, they could not go beyond *saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*. Only when the time ripened and they had met the Buddha were they able to become chief disciples. They could go beyond *saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa* only after fulfilling their aspiration to become chief disciples. They were of the type of person who attains Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge just by hearing a short stanza.

That's why in Myanmar, we say, '*Me-du-yin, me-du-neh.*' I like this phrase very much. It means, 'We each have our own capabilities, no need to compare with others.' We ourselves have no such capability, so it is impossible for us to attain Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge just by hearing a very short stanza.

What defines the second type of person, the *vipañcitaññū*? They are individuals who can attain Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge after hearing long explanations of the Dhamma. Do you remember the first discourse given by the Buddha? It was the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. Do you remember who the listeners were? They were not yet *bhikkhus*. They were just five ascetics. They would

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become bhikkhus later. When the Buddha expounded the first discourse, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, how many became Sotāpanna? The ascetic who would become Venerable Koṇḍañña was at that time the only one in the human realm who had attained first Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge.

I think there are many among you who have heard or read the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta. You should ask yourselves, ‘Have I attained Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge?’ Those of you who have never heard or read this sutta, when you go home, please find this sutta and read it and try this out. Ask yourself, ‘Can I become a Sotāpanna after hearing or after listening to detailed explanations?’ If after reading it through once you are not a Sotāpanna, please read it a hundred times, or even a thousand times. But for sure you will not attain the first Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge.

‘*Me-du-yin, me-du-neh.*’

The third type of person, the *neyya puggala*, is an individual who can’t become a Noble One by attaining Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge just by hearing either brief utterances or detailed explanations. They need to practise step by step systematically according to what is explained in the teachings of the Buddha.

They need to practise the three trainings systematically. Observing morality, they need to proceed to the second training, the training of concentration. As the Buddha said, ‘One who is concentrated

knows and sees the Truths as they really are.' After developing concentration, they can proceed to the third training, the training of insight. If they practise diligently one step after another, and if their past accumulated kamma and present efforts meet and converge, they are going to attain Path and Fruition in this very life. This is the third type of person.

Nowadays, many belong to this third type of person. Even among all of you, many will prove to be *neyya puggala*, and you will need to practise the three trainings systematically step by step for the realisation of the Dhamma and the attainment of Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge in this very life.

The last one, the fourth type of person, is the *pa-daparama*. No matter how hard he tries and no matter how much time he spends in meditation in this life, he can't attain jhāna absorption concentration, nor can he attain Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge in this present life. His practice will be only for the fulfilment of his pāramī and for his realisation of the Dhamma in the future. This is the fourth type of person.

Regardless of whether we are the third or fourth type of person, we should practise diligently and systematically step by step according to the Buddha's teachings in this very life. If we are the third type of person, we may realise the Dhamma in this very life. Even if we are the fourth type of person, our practice will enable us to realise the Dhamma in the future.

Ultimate Mentality and Ultimate Materiality

Another thing that vipassanā meditation teachers teach nowadays is that ultimate mentality and ultimate materiality, which are very deep and profound, can be realised only by a Buddha. They say it is impossible for us to realise such deep mentality and materiality, which in a finger snap are arising and perishing millions of times over. They ask, 'How can one see such a thing?' So they substitute a new 'rūpa' and a new 'nāma' as objects in place of what the Buddha taught. Do you know about this? I think many of you know. What do such teachers teach? They teach as follows: When you are walking, your physical body is moving. The body which is doing something is rūpa. The mind which is knowing the bodily action is nāma. In this way they replace the nāma and rūpa taught by the Buddha. These teachers insist that if we simply know bodily actions on the one hand and the mind that knows them on the other as rūpa and nāma respectively, we can realise the Dhamma. What do you think? If it is so, then would it have been necessary for the bodhisatta to fulfil pāramī for four incalculable and one hundred thousand eons? There would have been no need if it was so, and it would not have been necessary for a Buddha to appear in the world.

Actually the Buddha taught ultimate mentality and ultimate materiality, which are the First Noble Truth, the Noble Truth of Suffering. What are ultimate mentality and materiality? How do they arise? In what form? This is something you all need

to understand. I have explained this to all of you. How many meditation objects did the Buddha teach when He taught insight meditation? He taught two objects. What are they? They are nāma and rūpa.

When the Buddha taught rūpa meditation, what specifically did the Buddha teach? He taught four elements meditation. Let me quote from the commentary again: '*Duvidhañhi kammaṭṭhānaṃ rūpa-kammaṭṭhānaṃ arūpakammaṭṭhānañca*' – when the Buddha taught vipassanā, He taught rūpa meditation and nāma meditation. '*Tattha bhagavā rūpakammaṭṭhānaṃ kathento saṅkhepamanasikāraavasena vā vitthāramanasikāraavasena vā catudhātuvaṅvatthānaṃ kathesi*' – when the Buddha taught rūpa meditation, He taught four elements meditation both in a brief and in a detailed method.

Therefore, if you want to realise ultimate materiality, you must practise rūpa meditation. Rūpa meditation must begin with four elements meditation. As I have told you, if you discern the twelve characteristics of the four elements systematically throughout your whole body, when concentration improves you will see just a block of four elements. Your body disappears, and the perception of being disappears. At that time you just see your body as a block of four elements. If you continue to discern four elements in that block of four elements, you will find that your body emits light, which changes gradually from grey to white until finally it becomes a block of bright light. You don't see your body; you just see a block of very bright light. Then, if you discern the four elements in that block of light, and if you can keep

Ultimate Mentality and Ultimate Materiality

on discerning them in that block of light for one hour, you can attain access concentration.

If you continue discerning the four elements in that block of light, it will break down into very small particles called *rūpa kalāpa*. These are very, very tiny. Have you ever seen *rūpa kalāpa*? Would you like to see them? If so, you must follow the way the Buddha taught and must practise as He taught. What do you have to practise? You have to practise four elements meditation. If you develop concentration through practising four elements meditation, you will see these very small particles. Even though most of you haven't seen them yet, I want you to understand at least in part. So I will give you an example. But I don't know whether you will understand my example or not.

Do you watch television in your home? I don't know what type of television you have; that's why I told you I don't know whether you will understand or not. When you switch on an old television, what do you see on the screen before the program starts? Very small dots, right? Are they big or small? They're small. Yes, we can say they are small, but you can still see them with the naked eye. It is small, but you can see them with your unaided eyes. If you divide one of the very small dots on the screen a hundred times, a thousand times, it will be similar to the tiny particles. Do you know about atoms? Have you ever seen an atom? Before the twentieth century, scientists considered the atom to be the smallest unit of materiality. This was their thinking in former times. Then at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth,

scientists found that they could split atoms into protons, electrons, and neutrons. When were they finally able to split atoms into protons, electrons, and neutrons? At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. So these protons, electrons, and neutrons are called sub-atomic particles. The tiny particles about which the Buddha taught, and which were penetrated by the Buddha, and which you yourselves all need to penetrate, are called rūpa kalāpa and are very much like sub-atomic particles. When did the Buddha realise them? Two thousand six hundred years ago, and without using any instrument. He realised rūpa kalāpa without the aid of any instrument, and with no need of a laboratory, but only by means of concentration.

On the full moon day of Vesākha, the bodhisatta approached the Bodhi Tree and practised ānāpāna up to the fourth jhāna, and then he continued on with kasiṇa meditation, the eight attainments, and the fourteen ways, up to the attainment of supernatural powers. He attained *pubbenivāsa-abhiññāna*, the ability to recollect his many past lives. This is what he attained in the first watch of the night. With that supernatural power he attained the realisation of ultimate mentality and ultimate materiality. So the bodhisatta realised these small particles, not unlike sub-atomic particles, 2600 years ago under the Bodhi Tree without any microscope or any other instrument or any laboratory.

Over the years, teaching at Pa-Auk, I have taught many foreigners and local practitioners. I have instructed them first of all to develop concentration,

and then to see these small particles. Don't you want to see them? Will I have the opportunity to teach you such profound Dhamma? I hope I will have the opportunity to teach it to all of you.

You all are very fortunate to hear such Dhamma. Rare is the arising of a Buddha in the world. Rare is it to hear the Dhamma. Rare is it to be born as a human being. Rare is it to be a human who has faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. Rare is the opportunity to practise meditation. Rare is the opportunity to realise the Dhamma as they really are. Now you are encountering many such opportunities. What are you doing? What is most important to you? To realise the Dhamma. If it is so, what do you need to do? You must develop concentration, just by focusing on the primary object with which you are practising. Nothing else.

The Buddha said, '*Tumhehi kiccamaṭappaṃ, akkhātāro tathāgatā*' – 'I am the one who shows the way, you must travel it by yourself.'²⁸ The Buddha cannot make you realise any attainments. The Buddha shows you how to practise in order to achieve those attainments. The Buddha did His part by showing the way. Now you need to do your part.

²⁸ Dh. 276:

*Tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ, akkhātāro Tathāgatā.
Paṭipannā pamokkhanti, jhāyino mārabandhanā.*

You yourselves must strive ardently; the Tathāgatas only point the way.

Those meditators who tread the Path are released from the bonds of Māra.

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So, scientists can split an atom into protons, electrons, and neutrons, but only by using instruments. You may know that we are surrounded at all times by many tiny bacteria. Can you see them with the naked eye? Only after scientists invented the microscope, which can enlarge things many times, could they actually see all the very small bacteria that surround us. With the help of a microscope you can see what you otherwise can't see with your unaided eyes. The Dhamma penetrated by the Buddha, the Dhamma taught by the Buddha, the Dhamma you all need to penetrate is beyond the naked eye. You need an instrument to penetrate the Dhamma, not some external instrument but just your concentration, which is like a microscope. But a microscope is still not as powerful as concentration. Do you believe this?

Microscopes cannot enable you to see the truth. Only concentration can enable you to see the truth. That is why you don't want to depend on a microscope, which cannot help you see the truth. Be someone who resolves to depend on the concentration that can enable you to see the truth as it really is.

These rūpa kalāpa are the particles that were taught by the Buddha and penetrated by the Buddha. According to the teachings of the Buddha, there is no man, there is no woman, there is no tree, there is no mountain, there is no building; there are only very small particles which are arising and perishing rapidly all the time.

Now you may still have doubt. If so, be assured that there is nothing wrong with you. Why is that? Because you haven't developed concentration yet. You still haven't applied yourself to practising with the aim of seeing these tiny particles. Suppose there are meditators who can see these small particles now; if such meditators close their eyes and discern four elements in the people sitting around them here, they will see just small particles everywhere. If they discern four elements in this building, they see just tiny particles. If they pay attention to the four elements in the surrounding space, they see just very small particles. They see no men, no women, no buildings, no mountains, no trees – just tiny particles. Everything becomes the same. At such a time you will not disagree with the Buddha. You will agree with the Buddha.

What did the Buddha say? He said, 'I don't argue with anybody in this world. It is they who argue with me.'²⁹ Why? People in the world have no eyes, no wisdom; they are blind. Are you blind or are you not blind? Do you know who you are? You are not blind in the physical sense, yet you are blind to the ultimate truth. That is why the Buddha said, 'Blind is this world.'³⁰ I don't want you to continue to live

²⁹ SN.III.1.10.2 Puppahasuttam (SN 22.94 The Discourse on Flowers): '*Nāham, bhikkhave, lokena vivadāmi, lokova mayā vivadati. na, bhikkhave, dhammavādī kenaci lokasmim vivadati*' – 'Bhikkhus, I do not dispute with the world; rather, it is the world that disputes with me. A proponent of the Dhamma does not dispute with anyone in the world.'

³⁰ Dh. 174:

*Andhabhūto ayam loko, tanukettha vipassati
Sakuno jālamuttova, appo saggāya gacchati.*

blindly in a dark world. I want you to change so as not to be blind.

So these very small particles must be penetrated. But I want to remind all of you that these tiny particles are not yet ultimate materiality; they are just the smallest unit of materiality seen in conventional reality. In each particle, there exists earth element, water element, fire element, wind element, colour, smell, taste, nutritive essence, and possibly life faculty and sensitivity, among others. There are at least eight, nine, or ten ultimate materialities in each kalāpa. You need to analyse these using your 'instrument'. What is the instrument? Concentration. You need to use the light of concentration, the light of wisdom – the light of wisdom which illuminates them so you can see them as they really are. This is something scientists cannot do. In the light born of the wisdom of concentration, everything internal and external becomes the same. Past, present, and future all become the same. Arising and perishing, the same. No man, no woman – you will agree with the Buddha at that time. Your faith in the Buddha will become very strong.

Then you must continue with ultimate mentality. Just knowing something you're doing is not nāma kammaṭṭhāna as taught by the Buddha. Just knowing the mind that knows physical action as nāma, which is what many teachers teach nowadays, is not conducive to the realisation of Nibbāna. This

Blind is the world; here only a few possess insight.
Only a few, like birds escaping from the net, go to
realms of bliss.

is just a superficial way of understanding. You need to go beyond this. According to the Buddha's teaching, *nāma* arises in the form of mental cognitive processes, with many mind moments, which are followed by process-freed mind moments too. Cognitive processes and process-freed mentality (*vīthi* and *vīthi mutta*) were taught by the Buddha as *nāma*. Let me explain. Right now you are hearing my voice. As you hear my voice, the sound impinges on your ear-sensitivity at the same time that it impinges on your mind-door. Do you agree? It impinges on your mind-door too. To make you understand better, I will explain it more. When you were young, deluded by wrong view, you listened to music; you used to make the bass strong so the sound would be loud and pounding – boom... boom...boom. What happened at that time? Here (in the heart) you feel the boom...boom...boom, right? Yes. Thus a certain object, whether sensed by the eye, ear, nose, tongue, or body, when it impinges on the respective sense-door, that object also impinges on the mind-door. One object impinges on two doors at the same time. A visible object impinges on the eye-sensitivity and the mind-door at the same time. An audible object impinges on both the ear-sensitivity and the mind-door. The mind-door is called *bhavaṅga* in Pāli. The Buddha said that when those who are not deaf hear a sound, it impinges on the ear-sensitivity and on the mind-door, and at that time the ear-door cognitive process will arise followed by the mind-door cognitive processes. They are arising and perishing rapidly many times over. They are very quick. Do you want to know how they arise? I have given an example for ultimate materiality but I don't know how to give an

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example for you so that you can understand ultimate mentality. I will try then. This is how meditators have reported their experience to me: When they saw the mental process, when a sound impinged on their ear-door and mind-door, they reported, 'Mentality arises in this way, Bhante' – and they would imitate their impression. Do you want to hear the way they reported? 'Di-di-di-di-di-di-di...' I cannot pronounce the syllables quickly enough to mimic the way they arise. Don't you want to experience this? Keep in mind, you all admire science; but scientists will never realise or discover mentality in this way even until the world is destroyed.

The Buddha discovered this deep and profound Dhamma 2600 years ago without any laboratory and without any instruments. He realised this Dhamma just through His training, and with the help of the light of concentration, with the help of the light of wisdom. You all need to have this point of view in order to realise the Dhamma. So suppose you have realised ultimate mentality and materiality. It means you have penetrated the First Noble Truth. Keep in mind, if you haven't penetrated ultimate mentality and materiality in this way, you haven't penetrated the Dhamma taught by the Buddha. If you don't penetrate these things, you will still disagree with the Buddha. Only when you see the way the Buddha sees will you not take issue with the Buddha. But the range of your wisdom will not be the same as His. The Buddha saw completely; you won't see completely but only partially. The Buddha said that an ordinary disciple must see partially, a seeing that will not equal a Buddha's seeing. But this partial

seeing is enough to become a Noble One.³¹ Without such realisation, you will not have realised the First Noble Truth. For now, I will not explain any further about ultimate mentality. I will explain more only when I have the opportunity to teach you how to penetrate ultimate mentality.

Dependent Origination

Now, what is the Second Noble Truth? It is the Truth of the Origin of Suffering. In order to elucidate this Truth, I will talk about how one of my disciples had practised Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). I taught him to discern five past lives.

The Buddha said that, because we have not known and have not seen Dependent Origination, you and I have wandered in the round of rebirths, not knowing how to make an end of suffering.³² So if we don't know and don't see Dependent Origination, there is no way to make an end of suffering. Therefore, we teach meditators to know and to see their past lives,

³¹ Commentary to MN.I.1.1 Mūlapariyāyasuttam (MN 1 The Discourse on the Root of All Things).

³² See DN.II.2 Mahānidānasuttam; DN 15 The Great Discourse on Origination: '*Gambhīro cāyaṃ, ānanda, paṭiccasamuppādo gambhīrāvabhāso ca. etassa, ānanda, dhammassa ananubodhā appaṭi-vedhā evamayam pajā taniākulakajātā kulagaṇṭhikajātā muñjapabbajabhūtā apāyaṃ duggatiṃ vimipātaṃ saṃsāraṃ nātivattati*' – 'Ananda, this dependent origination is profound and appears profound. It is through not understanding, not penetrating this doctrine that the world has become like a tangled ball of string, matted like a bird's nest, tangled like reeds, unable to pass beyond the states of woe, the woeful destination, ruin and the round of rebirths.'

Expectation Derived from One's Own Point of View

at least five past lives or sometimes even more, in order to know and to see cause and effect.

So the Second Noble Truth is the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering. To put it simply, the First Noble Truth points out that suffering exists and tells us what suffering is, while the Second Noble Truth tells us what causes that suffering. The central teaching of the Buddha is the law of kamma. What is it that makes someone a Buddhist? Do you know? Are you a Buddhist? Who qualifies as a Buddhist? A Buddhist is someone who has faith in the law of kamma. As the Buddha said, 'Nothing happens without causes; whatever happens, there is a cause.'³³

Now, here in this place some are tall, some are short, some are beautiful, and I see nobody who is ugly, but we all have different appearances. These differences are due to different causes. It is just because of kamma. This is what the bodhisatta realised on the full moon day of Vesākha. Under the Bodhi Tree, in the second watch of the night, he penetrated causality directly, and later as the Buddha He taught His disciples how to penetrate causes and their effects so as to know the Second Noble Truth. So to know the Second Noble Truth, you must first penetrate the First Noble Truth. Without having penetrated the First Noble Truth, it is impossible to understand the Second Noble

³³ See MN.I.4.8. Mahātaṇhāsankhayasuttaṃ (MN 38.1 The Great Discourse on the Destruction of Craving): '*Imasmim sati idaṃ hoti, imassuppādā idaṃ uppajjati*' – 'When this is, that is; when this arises, that arises.'

Dependent Origination

Truth. It is impossible to penetrate the Second Noble Truth without first penetrating the First Noble Truth.

So as for the meditator I mentioned: After he had realised the First Noble Truth, which is ultimate mentality and materiality, I instructed him to discern the *nāma* and *rūpa* of that very evening, then the *nāma* and *rūpa* of the day before, then the *nāma* and *rūpa* of the day before that, then three days ago, one week ago, one month ago, one year ago, two years ago, five years ago, ten years ago, and twenty years ago; and as he was then nearly thirty, I told him to discern the *nāma rūpa* of twenty-nine years ago. That was very near the beginning stage in his mother's womb. Then he continued discerning *nāma rūpa* and reached the beginning stage in his mother's womb. So he reached the very beginning stage, the moment of rebirth linking consciousness. He discerned ultimate mentality and materiality arising at that time, at that beginning stage of this life. Wishing to know the causes of this ultimate mentality and materiality, he discerned further back to his most recent past life. And then he saw some of his past lives prior to that one. I taught him to discern five past existences altogether. So counting his present existence, the total number of lives he discerned would number six. I will start by explaining from the earliest one up to the present.

In his fifth past life, counting back in time, he had been a *brahmā*-god. How does one come to take birth in the *brahmā* realm? It is possible only after attaining *jhāna* concentration. You can be reborn in the *brahmā* realm only if you can maintain *jhāna*

mastery right up until the very moment before your death. If you maintained second jhāna absorption concentration at the near-death moment of this very life, you would be reborn in the second brahmā realm. You wouldn't need to take conception in a womb. A brahmā appears immediately, in a fully formed body. Immediately after the death consciousness arises, the brahmā appears there with a fully formed body. This is something you cannot see with the naked eye. Nor is there any other religious teacher who can teach about it besides the Buddha. If you systematically practise the way the Buddha taught, you can realise that there is a brahmā realm, there is a celestial realm, there is a hell, and so forth. So that yogi was able to see his fifth past life as a brahmā.

Brahmās have no nose-sensitivity, they have no tongue-sensitivity, and they have no body-sensitivity. They have only eye- and ear-sensitivity. They want to have eye-sensitivity because they want to see the Buddha. They want to have ear-sensitivity because they want to hear the Dhamma.

How much dukkha do we have because of our nose-sensitivity? How much dukkha do we have because of our tongue-sensitivity? How busy you are as a human because of this tongue-sensitivity! How much dukkha you encounter because of your body-sensitivity! How good it would be if you had no such sensitivities! Do you agree? Do you see the dukkha in this? If you don't see the dukkha, you cannot be reborn in the brahmā realm because you will not practise well.

Dependent Origination

Brahmās don't eat any food. Their food is the bliss that arises from entering jhāna. Is it good? They have no need to cook, no need to earn money – how good it is! Very good! So in that previous life, that yogi practised jhāna absorption concentration as a brahmā. Unfortunately, he could not maintain jhāna absorption concentration in the near-death moment. Instead, the last object that appeared in his mind was the Buddha's own image. Is it good? Is it wholesome or unwholesome? Yes, it is a very, very superior object. It wasn't just an image of the Buddha; rather, it was the genuine visible appearance of the real Buddha that appeared to him. Taking that as his near-death object, he was very happy.

In his next existence, his fourth past life, he was born as a man and became a king in that life. Do you want to be a king? Maybe there is someone here who wants to be a king. So as a king, he accumulated both good and bad kamma; however, since he was born in the human realm as a man and a king after he had passed away from the brahmā realm, I believe he had a very good temperament. Therefore he accumulated a lot of very wholesome kamma in his life as a king.

Now, there was a very beautiful cow that was fed in the king's palace. It was very beautiful. Whenever the king went there to see the cow, he felt a strong affection for her. He became attached to that cow. When that king was about to die, the last object that appeared in his mind door was not some other wholesome kamma but that beautiful cow, unfortunately. He died with attachment to that cow. So

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he was born as a bull in the next existence, his third past life. But even though he was born as a bull, he accumulated much good kamma, because a good character and a good temperament influenced that bull.

One day the owner of the bull intended to do meritorious deeds. So the bull pulled the bullock cart, loaded with many material things. In your experience, even intelligent humans like ourselves, when we have to carry something heavy, are we happy? We are unhappy. But even though this bull had been born as a dumb animal due to the unfortunate kamma that appeared at the near-death moment in its previous existence, it nonetheless had been born with a good temperament which influenced that bull very much. It was very happy while it was pulling the bullock cart, loaded with material things to make an offering. Wholesome states of mind arose in that bull. Fortunately for the bull, that was the kamma that appeared to it at its near-death moment. What happened in his next existence? In his second past life, he was born as a man and became a carpenter.

One day, as a carpenter with good temperament, he built a small bridge that people and bullock carts could cross. This too was a wholesome deed. That was the kamma that appeared at the near-death moment in that life. In the next existence, which was his immediate past life, he was born as a man again, and he became very rich. Since man is mortal, one day he was about to die. Fortunately at that rich man's near-death moment, the last object that appeared was an offering of food to three bhikkhus.

Dependent Origination

Is that wholesome or unwholesome? It is wholesome. At that time he made the following aspiration: 'Because of this deed, may I penetrate the Dhamma that these bhantes have penetrated.' Is it good? Owing to such kamma, in his present life he was able to meditate very well with the support of his previous practice as a brahmā, so that he was able to attain jhāna absorption concentration. And because of his aspiration to penetrate the Dhamma, he could penetrate the Dhamma very deeply in this life.

I relate all this to help you understand the Second Noble Truth. If you want to realise the Dhamma, if you want to attain Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge in this very life, this is what you all need to understand, because if you don't realise the First Noble Truth and the Second Noble Truth, you can't practise genuine vipassanā. So after realising the First and Second Noble Truths, you can start insight meditation.

As the bodhisatta practised insight meditation under the Bodhi Tree, after having realized the First Noble Truth in the first watch of the night and the Second Noble Truth in the second watch of the night, through two kinds of supernatural power, then by practising insight meditation in the third watch of the night, before dawn, he attained the final attainment associated with Omniscience. This is the way to Nibbāna. This is the point of view all of you should hold. Your aim should be to know and to see the Dhamma as it really is. If your point of view is not in accord with this, then no matter how much you try, how much time you spend, or how hard you exert yourself, you will never realise Nibbāna.

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So, holding to Right View, knowing the true teachings of the Buddha...

May you all engage in the practice of meditation in this very life!

May you all realise the Dhamma as it really is in this very life!

And may you all be able to see Nibbāna and make an end of suffering in this very life!

*Ārambhatha nikkamatha,
Yuñjatha buddhasāsane.
Dhunātha maccuno senaṃ,
Naḷāgāraṃva kuñjaro.*

Arouse your energy in the practice,
Strive on for the attainment of liberation,
Exert yourself while the True Teachings of
the Buddha are still flourishing!
Sweep away the army of Death,
As an elephant crushes a hut of reeds.³⁴

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

³⁴ SN.I.6.2.4 Aruṇavatīsuttaṃ (SN 6.14 The Discourse Concerning Aruṇavatī).

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Puñña and Pāramī

Question: What is the difference between the perfections (pāramī) and meritorious deeds (puñña)? Practitioners of other religions also do meritorious deeds; are they also accumulating pāramī?

Answer: Another term for puñña is *kusala kamma*, wholesome kamma. Kusala kamma and pāramī are not the same.

Buddhists as well as non-Buddhists accomplish wholesome kamma in their lives.

During His lifetime, the Buddha would sometimes visit the celestial realms. There He would meet those who had been born in the celestial realms because of their past wholesome kamma. Some were Buddhists, others were not. So it isn't only Buddhists who perform wholesome kamma. This is what I want to share with you.

Buddhists are people who believe in the law of kamma. When they accumulate wholesome kamma, they do so with faith in the law of kamma. Hence they accumulate wholesome kamma which is associated with wisdom.

Non-Buddhists also accumulate wholesome kamma, even though they have wrong view. If this wholesome kamma gives its results at the near-death moment, they may be born in the celestial realms too. However, as they do wholesome kamma without faith in the law of kamma, their celestial mansions

and the degree of their prosperity will be inferior to those of Buddhists.

Here I would ask you to please be aware of the following point: Even though they have no faith in the law of kamma, they are nonetheless responsible for their kamma and the kammic results they experience. Only you, and no one else, can be responsible for your kamma. Your kamma in turn is the reason for your happiness and unhappiness.

The Buddha would also sometimes visit the hell realms, and He would see those who had been born there because they had accumulated bad kamma. They were born there not because of anyone else but solely on account of their own bad kamma, such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling lies, and taking intoxicants. All these wrong actions can result in rebirth in the four woeful states. That's why you must take responsibility for yourself. Don't let anyone else be responsible for you, because no one else can really assume responsibility for you.

Now, what is the difference between good kamma and pāramī? Whenever you are going to do wholesome kamma, you may do so with the intention of being reborn in a good realm, or becoming a rich and wealthy person with social standing and high birth and so forth. If these are the intentions underlying your good actions, you will just be performing wholesome kamma. This is not the way of fulfilling pāramī.

On the other hand, you can make an offering or practise morality or sit in meditation with the inten-

tion of making an end of suffering, to give up the causes of suffering. This is the way of fulfilling pāramī.

The intention to be reborn in a good realm, or to be reborn as a wealthy man, or to have a high birth and good position and so forth – this is taking, not giving up. It is ‘I want! I want!’ Doing so is just accumulating more kamma.

We should do good with the intention of relinquishment and think, ‘I want to give up the causes of suffering, like the defilements. I want to make an end of suffering.’ This way of offering and doing good deeds is not taking, but giving up – giving up the causes of attachment to living things and non-living things. This is giving up defilements.

Which is better, taking, or giving? For sure, giving is better.

Therefore, starting from today, whatever you are going to do, in order for it to be the way to fulfil pāramī, you should make an aspiration like the following: ‘By doing this, may I be able to give up the causes of suffering.’ Your actions will then be the way of fulfilling the pāramī for the realisation of Nibbāna, to make an end of suffering, and to attain liberation.

Timely Dāna

Question: Bhante explained that when we perform *dāna*, *sīla*, and *bhāvanā* (generosity, morality, and meditation), we will be fulfilling pāramī. So in the

case of dāna, would Bhante please explain, by giving an example, to whom we should give dāna and what type of dāna we should offer, so that it becomes pāramī and not just wholesome kamma?

Answer: As I have told you, whatever wholesome deeds you do, whether offerings or practising morality or meditation, if you do these things with the intention of making an end of suffering, it will be for the fulfilling of pāramī. Guided by this advice, please make whatever types of offering you wish.

But all of you know this verse: ‘*Sabbadānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jīnāti*’ – ‘The gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts.’³⁵ Therefore, if you have the capability to make an offering of the gift of Dhamma, you should try to do so. Even if you can’t give Dhamma by giving a talk like an ordained person, you may still be able to offer dhamma books or audio recordings to those who don’t know the Dhamma and those who love the Dhamma. This too is a way of giving which excels all other gifts.

There are three kinds of gifts – the gift of materiality, the gift of fearlessness, and the gift of Dhamma. Of these, the gift of Dhamma is the highest form of giving.

The Buddha also taught about dāna in another way – He taught about timely giving, *kāla-dāna*. I want all of you to consider deeply what it means to offer a timely gift. A timely gift is very good for both the giver and the receiver.

³⁵ Dhp. 354.

Selected Questions and Answers

As the Buddha said, ‘*Ijjhati, bhikkhave, sīlavato cetopanīdhi visuddhattā*’ – ‘Bhikkhus, a virtuous person’s wish will certainly be fulfilled by purification of conduct.’³⁶ For the virtuous, none of their wishes are impossible.

So when you are going to make an offering, you should be virtuous. You should practise morality. You should understand cause and effect. And you should make your offering with a happy mind, from among the things you have obtained in a righteous way. These are four necessary conditions for the donor. Furthermore, the Buddha said it will give very great results if you can offer your gift to a recipient who is virtuous.

If you make an offering to someone who not only practises morality but who can also practise samādhi very well, the benefits will be even greater than the first type of offering. The benefits of an offering made to someone who is practising insight meditation will be superior to the first two types of offering. The benefits of offering a gift to Noble persons exceeds comparison with all other types of offering. No words can describe how strong the results of such an offering are.

The bodhisatta, however, would never discriminate as to the receivers of his offerings. Instead, he made offerings to whoever was in need. If we can emulate the bodhisatta in this way, it will be very good.

³⁶ AN.VIII.1.4.5 Dānūpapattisuttam (AN 8.35 The Discourse on Rebirth on Account of Giving).

The minds of most Buddhist lay devotees incline strongly towards making offerings to the ordained, to the virtuous, or to those who can practise meditation. But I want all of you to offer to those who are really in need. You should offer not only to ordained persons, but also to those who are really in need. This is what constitutes a timely gift.³⁷

Mettā and Sharing Dhamma with Family

Question: The Dhamma is so wonderful! Especially now that we have this opportunity to learn and to be in touch with the original, uncorrupted teachings of the Buddha. We are all good children of the Dhamma. Because we are able to meet with the good Dhamma, we have the Dhamma as our refuge and derive much joy from this. We try to share this with our family and with our close relatives, but it's as if they are just stopping at the doorstep but cannot come inside. Is there something we have done that is insufficient? How can we guide them so that they will also be able to learn and to experience the true Dhamma?

³⁷ See AN.V.1.4.6 Kāladānasuttaṃ (AN 5.36 The Discourse on Timely Gifts):

‘Bhikkhus, there are these five timely gifts. What five?’

- 1) One gives a gift to a visitor.
- 2) One gives a gift to one setting out on a journey.
- 3) One gives a gift to someone who is sick.
- 4) One gives a gift during a famine.
- 5) One first presents the newly harvested crops and fruits to the virtuous ones.

These are the five timely gifts.’

Answer: Your question is rooted in your mettā. Mettā is acting for the good of oneself and others. However, we must be skilful in applying our mettā towards ourselves and others.

We want our friends and relatives to hear the Dhamma, which is beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle, and beautiful in the end. Still, we need to know our limits, and we need to know their limits too.

Even though we have high aspirations for them, if they are not ready, our wishes will not be realised. For that reason, in working for the good of others, we should be satisfied with what they are capable of at each point in time. We should increase our help little by little, day by day, year by year, according to their readiness.

What we want them to be is one thing; what they are able to be is another. Our consideration, then, should not be what we want for them; we need to take into account what they are capable of.

If we have high expectations when we are going to act for the benefit of someone else, we will suffer greatly. Therefore, we need to determine our actions according to the capacity of those others, and not according to what we ourselves want.

Whenever we are going to do something for others, whether they be few or many, we need to emulate the Buddha. Otherwise we will suffer along the way as we are trying to accomplish the good of others.

Early each morning before dawn, the Buddha would enter into the Great Compassion Attainment (*Mahā-Karuṇā Samāpatti*) and survey the world with His Buddha-eye. Someone would appear to His enlightened vision, and He would take stock of the circumstances and reflect on what that person might be able to achieve.

Sometimes the Buddha would see someone and know that that person would take refuge in the Triple Gem if only he could hear an explanation of the Dhamma. No matter how far or how many miles away that person was, the Buddha would go there just for that purpose – to explain the Dhamma to that person, the right Dhamma for him, a teaching that was fit for him and that would allow him to take refuge in the Triple Gem. At that point the Buddha wouldn't do more than that; His efforts would go only that far. Mettā is doing something beneficial according to the capability of others, and not according to what we want.

Sometimes the Buddha would see someone who was ready to observe the five precepts. Regardless of how many miles away the person was, the Buddha would go there and explain the Dhamma for no other reason than to give that person the opportunity to take the five precepts.

Sometimes the Buddha would see someone who could become a Sotāpanna if only he or she could hear the Dhamma. So with great compassion and great loving-kindness, the Buddha would go there for the good of that person. He would teach Dhamma that was fitting and suitable for that per-

son and explain it. Then that person would attain first Path and Fruition Knowledges after hearing the Dhamma. The Buddha acted according to what that person could do. That's why mettā is not doing what we ourselves want to do; mettā is doing good according to what others are capable of.

Therefore, you all need to understand how to apply real mettā among yourselves. The conflicts between friends and between parents and children occur because of not knowing how to apply mettā in the right way. Almost all parents want their children to do what the parents want; elders want their juniors to do what the elders want. Instead, we must always consider the capacity of those who are the objects of our mettā. If you really want to apply your mettā in the right way, I want to remind all of you about what I shared with you regarding the art of acceptance – you must accept the actual situation of each individual. Based on that, you should then act for their good. You need to accept them for who they are. Then you can act according to what they can do. Only then will both they and you have happiness. If we do not apply mettā in a reasonable and correct way, we will suffer for our efforts. We will act with expectations, and expectation is the primary source of depression.

The Four Brahmavihārā

Question: How do we cultivate *mettā*, *karuṇā*, *muditā*, and *upekkhā* (loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity) in our daily life in

The Four Brahmavihārā

order to have much loving-kindness and compassion and to be welcomed by everyone?

Answer: It is very important to practise these four sublime abidings (*brahmavihārā*) in life, so as to improve each individual's personality in a way that is praised by the wise. We need to practise the four sublime abidings to avoid straying off into extremes; we need the qualities of these four sublime abidings to live with a balanced mind.

Those who know how to practise the four sublime abidings are truly able to accomplish their own good and the good of others. There are few people who know how to benefit both themselves and others because there are few people who know how to apply the four sublime abidings in their daily lives.

The first sublime abiding, *mettā*, has been explained in an earlier question. Do you remember? I will repeat it in case you don't remember.

So what is *mettā*? *Mettā* is acting for the good of oneself and of others. Acting for the good of others is *mettā*. But 'acting for the good of others according to what I want' is not real *mettā*, nor is it real *mettā* to say, 'I will work for the good of others by giving what I want to give.' *Mettā* is acting for the benefit of others after observing carefully what that person can do, what that person needs, and what are that person's weaknesses and strengths. These need to be taken into account, and then we need to lend that person a hand according to his or her needs.

Selected Questions and Answers

If we put a lot of emphasis on what we want them to do and what we want them to be, there will be conflicts between us and them.

Parents have mettā towards their children. But most of the parents in the world want their sons and daughters to be like this or to be like that. Yes, these are parents' good wishes for their children. Even though they want their sons and daughters to be like this and like that, they need to observe carefully. If they want their children to be something, and after observing they know that their children have the potential to be what they want them to be, it is very good. They should support their children in that manner. If the way the parents want their children to be coincides with the way the children can be, the parents can then emphasise what they want their children to be as well as what their children are able to be. In this situation, everything will be fine.

Sometimes, however, what parents want their children to be is not the same as what the children are capable of being. In such a case, parents should emphasise what their children are able to be. Leaving aside their wishes and what they themselves want for their children, parents should support their children according to their children's capabilities. This is the right way of applying mettā in daily life with regard to our young people, our disciples, our students, and our sons and daughters.

I will continue with another point. Often people in the world choose not to do something really beneficial for others because they are afraid that those others will misunderstand or dislike their actions.

Sometimes there is something we could do that would be very beneficial for someone else. It might be something we could say to them; but if we were to say it on the spot, it would evoke their displeasure. They might become very angry at that time. However, in some situations of this sort, we need to act, accepting all their possible responses, because we understand that they are going to be very happy with our actions in the future. Understanding the benefits they are going to obtain in the future, we need to act on the spot, even though they might dislike our present actions. This is the way the wise have acted, are acting now, and will act in the future. You yourself need to accommodate your actions to the circumstances in this way. Your ability to do so will depend on your life experience and the level of your understanding.

However, if it is not necessary to act immediately in a way that may invite dislike, we should choose a more acceptable course of action if we can accomplish our intention in a more acceptable way. When we know that we have no other option than to act in a particular way, we should do so bravely, thinking of the good of others. With mettā, and not with hatred nor with pride, we should say or do what is necessary on the spot. This is also the way of acting for the good of others. For many, though, it is very difficult to discern the right time and the right conditions to do so.

This was also the way the Buddha practised whenever it was necessary. Notwithstanding the need to act on the spot, it will be really beneficial if we can choose the right words. We should not use harsh

words, but instead we should speak words which are soothing to the ears of the listeners. This is important.

What about karuṇā? Karuṇā is compassion towards suffering beings. The sight of someone who is suffering from physical or mental pain will shake the mind of the wise. This is the nature of the minds of the wise. The wise can't bear to see the suffering of others. So they want to do something and they want to help in whatever way they can. When they see beings suffering, at the least they will mentally wish them to be well even if they are incapable of alleviating their suffering through bodily or verbal actions.

For the most part, when people see someone do something wrong, they hate or dislike that person. Actually, if someone does something wrong, that person is going to suffer for their wrong action. Instead of feeling dislike or anger towards him, we should develop compassion towards him. We don't need to punish him. He will be punished by his wrong actions. He is going to suffer in the future. If it is possible, we should advise him not to act that way. We should develop as much compassion as possible towards those who do wrong, whether to us or to others. Only then will we find a way to help them.

To be able to apply mettā towards others effectively in our lives, we need to develop compassion and wait for the right time to act for their good. It sometimes happens that, although we really want to benefit those whom we meet, it is not the right time. We need to wait one year, two years, or even three years.

The Four Brahmavihāra

Sometimes we want to say something, but it is not yet the right time. They are not yet ready, so we need to be patient. We need to wait patiently for the right time to say something. It may take a long time for the right opportunity to arise. We need to practise patience if we want to act for the good of others.

If we put a lot of emphasis on what we want them to do, we will not be acting out of mettā. We will be acting out of *lobha* (greed). This way of treating others is also devoid of compassion. Because we do not observe carefully, we do not really understand what is possible for the other person to do. We understand neither his capability nor his potential. Then our actions may cause him suffering. Without compassion, then, we can't really act for the good of others. Compassion and mettā must work hand in hand.

Next is *muditā*, enjoying or developing appreciation and gladness on seeing the success of others. When most people in the world hear that someone is successful or hear of another's fame and gain, instead of feeling happy, they feel jealous. This way of practising is the opposite of *muditā*, appreciative joy.

When you hear about the success of your friends, how do you feel? Do you say, 'Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!?' If you can say 'Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!' it is very good; you are practising *muditā*. If instead you feel jealous, though, it will be very difficult for you.

According to the Buddha's teaching, nothing happens without causes. Even if we want to be wealthy, we can't become wealthy, no matter how hard or

how long we try, without having fulfilled in the past the prerequisite causes for us to be wealthy. Nothing happens without causes. Therefore, if you see someone succeed, put aside your long-standing habit of feeling jealous, and please change your mind immediately. Develop happiness over his or her success. Consider, understand, and reflect on the law of kamma, and remember that nothing happens without causes. There are causes for their success. Be happy about it. Only in this way can you practise muditā. Whatever the circumstances in which you find yourself, please change and improve your way of thinking. Only then will you improve day by day.

If we don't develop appreciative joy when we witness someone else's success, and if we become jealous instead, we are accumulating unwholesome kamma that is going to give its results in the future. When kamma like this gives its results, we find ourselves with no companions. But if you are happy and develop appreciative joy when you see the success of others, it will bring you happiness in the present and foster the maturing of your state of mind, and it will also bring you happiness in the future. Therefore, we all need to develop appreciative joy and apply it in our daily lives.

The practice of mettā, karuṇā, and muditā alone, without the support of upekkhā, equanimity, is ineffective. Even though you want to act for the good of others, and even though you want to relieve someone's suffering, and even though you want others to succeed, things will not turn out according to your wishes of mettā, nor will they turn out according to your wishes of karuṇā, nor will they turn out accord-

ing to your wishes of muditā. Things will turn out only according to the other person's own kamma. Understanding the workings of the law of kamma in this way is our means of developing equanimity with regard to ourselves and others. We can't really act for anyone else's benefit without the support of the practice of equanimity towards ourselves and others. Without equanimity towards ourselves and others, we can't benefit others in the long run. We will suffer on account of our lack of equanimity towards ourselves and others, and our lack of equanimity towards the desirable and undesirable outcomes that we may encounter along the way as we act for the good of others.

Upekkhā is the most superior state of mind. We all need to develop this quality. Without it, we can't act for the good of many in the long run.

Being the Only Buddhist in One's Family And Conversion

Question: First of all, I thank Bhante for sharing the Dhamma; I am very grateful for that. I am the only Buddhist in my family. I had wanted to convert since I was fifteen, which was eight years ago, but I was never given the opportunity to think for myself, to act accordingly, and to take responsibility for myself. So it has been only one or two years since I started to learn about Buddhism, because I don't live with my family anymore. Only these last two years have I been able to choose my religion for myself. My question is: How can I respect my parents after they actually hindered me on the path towards

liberation? How might I live peacefully, respecting them as they are, even though they strongly reject me because I converted to another religion? (In my family, this is something unthinkable and unspeakable.) I experience a lot of heavy feeling in my practice because of all this. So what kind of attitude should I adopt in this situation?

Answer: What I want to suggest to you is, please take your time. Don't be in a hurry to make a decision.

I was in South Korea in 2008. That was my first visit to South Korea. They invited me to conduct a meditation retreat for two months. There, Christians came to practise meditation too. In that retreat, they did not pay me any respect. Still, they asked me a lot of questions, and I explained things to them as best as I could.

One day they asked me, 'Bhante, do we need to convert to Buddhism?' How do you think I answered them? I didn't ask them to convert to Buddhism. 'Don't be in a hurry,' I said. 'Study the Dhamma more. Take your time. I didn't come here to convert anyone to Buddhism. I came to South Korea to share the true Dhamma.'

We are all seeking the truth; all of us genuinely want to know the truth. However, because we haven't come across the opportunity to hear the Dhamma, which is the Truth, we have a lot of confusion and doubt. So this is suffering. Not hearing and not knowing the truth is suffering. We don't understand what life is. We don't know the workings of kamma.

Being the Only Buddhist in One's Family
And Conversion

We don't know what it is that influences our lives. What created us? What is the real creator? We are not sure whether it is God or our kamma, rooted in bad and good intentions. The truth is, no one else is responsible for our happiness. We ourselves are responsible for our happiness. No one else is responsible for our unhappiness. We ourselves are responsible for our unhappiness.

The Christians on that retreat wanted to convert to Buddhism, but I didn't ask them to convert. I told them to take their time, because if someone has understood the truth from the intellectual point of view or through direct knowledge, is it necessary for them to convert in order to be Buddhists?

Buddhism is not a religion. Buddhism is a practice for those who want to know and see the Dhamma, the Truth. Under the category of religion, people say that they are Buddhists. They are many who are not really Buddhists but who nevertheless call themselves Buddhists.

If someone has realised the Dhamma, the Truth as it really is, I don't need to convert them. They already love the truth.

What is religion? Religion is a system of belief, a system of worship, and a system of prayer. Buddhism is not a system of belief, a system of worship, or a system of prayer. Buddhism is a way to realise the truth.

Selected Questions and Answers

The Buddha appeared in the world after realising the truth. If we love the truth, we must follow that way, not by depending on the Buddha but by depending on the Dhamma He taught. By depending on our effort, our mindfulness, and our concentration, we need to find the way to see the truth.

When you know the truth, you are someone who knows the truth. Do you call yourself a Buddhist? Yes, if you want to call yourself a Buddhist, you can. But the essential thing is for you to realise the truth. At that time, you become someone who realises the ultimate Truth. It is enough.

There's no need for you to argue with anyone. If they want to know, share with them. If they don't want to know, please respect them. Mutual respect is necessary. We need to develop mutual respect. If they are not ready to hear, if they are not ready to listen to the Dhamma, please wait for the right time.

We need to develop mettā towards ourselves and others. Mettā is acting for the good of oneself and others – not harming oneself, not harming others. If they are not ready, and if they are going to object, we harm them and we harm ourselves. We suffer, because they are not ready to listen. We argue with them.

Therefore, without any argument, we will help people. We will wait for the right time, the right place, the right person. Maybe it will take five years, or ten years, or maybe we will have to wait until we die.

Being the Only Buddhist in One's Family
And Conversion

So you don't need to discuss religion with your parents or your family. Just seek out the Dhamma until you know and see the Dhamma for yourself. This is the most important thing.

In the time of the Buddha, there were many who held wrong views. With the intention of complaining and finding fault with the Buddha, they approached Him. They were going to take issue with the Buddha. They were going to argue with the Buddha. However, the Buddha was able to know an individual's state of mind and their inmost thoughts. Knowing their state of mind and their reason for coming, the Buddha explained the Dhamma to them before they could ask any questions. They realised the Dhamma, which is what they wanted to know before they could so much as ask. They became very frightened. 'How did the Buddha know our intentions?' they asked themselves. The Buddha never required any of them to believe in Him or pay respect to Him. Then they realised that what they were planning to do was a very bad thing. The Buddha had very great compassion; He wanted to prevent them from creating unwholesome kamma and to keep them from wrong deeds which would be very bad for them, so the Buddha helped them by explaining the Dhamma, which is what they wanted to know before they could voice their questions. Touched and inspired, they raised their joined palms in reverence and took refuge, saying, '*Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi. Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi. Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi.*' Did anyone compel them to take refuge in the Triple Gem? The Buddha never compelled them to do so, right?

In 2008 I went to South Korea twice, the first time for the months of May and June. In November I went to South Korea again, accompanying the Pa-Auk Sayadaw. The devotees announced that we were going there to teach the Dhamma. At that time, these two ladies, who were Christians and who had previously asked me if they needed to convert to Buddhism, came to pay respect to me. They had converted to Buddhism. I never compelled them to convert.

Creator of the World?

Question: Who created the world and the beings living in it?

Answer: What do you think? Who created this world? Do you have the point of view that God created the world? If you have this point of view, God will be the cause of suffering for you.

God is not the creator. God didn't create the world, nor did God create us humans or the beings living in the world. It is we humans who created God. No one created sentient beings.

The fault of most people in the world lies in not knowing the truth. Not knowing the truth is the cause of all our suffering, the cause of all our problems. Because of ignorance, we do both wholesome and unwholesome actions. Because of wholesome and unwholesome kamma, we wander in the round of rebirths.

Creator of the World?

Because of not knowing the truth, which is ignorance, and because of defilements, people do a lot of unwholesome actions, and thereby they harm one another.

When the defilements of beings in the world become excessive and very serious, their lifespan becomes shorter and shorter. Various crimes will be committed by beings whose minds are covered by ignorance and whose defilements are very strong.

Birth in the human realm and the celestial realms are caused by wholesome kamma rooted in ignorance (not knowing the truth). Birth in the hungry ghost realm, the animal realm, and the hell realms are caused by unwholesome kamma and ignorance. Birth in the brahmā realm is also due to ignorance, attachment, and wholesome deeds.

Unless we have removed ignorance completely and without remainder, this world and the beings in it will continue to exist.

With their attachment to human life, people go about accumulating wholesome kamma. For this reason, they are born in the human world again. The same is true of birth in the deva realm, the animal realm, and in other realms as well.

Therefore, the causes for the creation and the continued existence of this world are ignorance (not knowing the truth) and the defilements which we have not yet removed.

Rebirth in the Deva Realm Or in the Human World – Which Is Better?

Question: Bhante mentioned earlier that ordinary disciples may need only two or three lives in order to become Noble Ones. If we are not able to become Noble Ones in this life, and if we would like to make an aspiration to be able to meet with the Dhamma in future lives, which would be better – to be reborn in the human world and to meet with the Dhamma, or to be reborn in the deva realm and to meet with the Dhamma?

Answer: On the first part, what I meant earlier was that, if all the right conditions are met, it may be possible for some to make an end of suffering within two or three existences. But it is also possible that a hundred lives or even a thousand lives or more are needed for others to fulfil their pāramī. For this reason, how long it takes to make an end of suffering is something we can't say for sure. It all depends on how strong your sense of urgency is, and how strong your desire to attain liberation is. After developing concentration, you can know and see the Dhamma, the Truths, as they really are, and then you can make an end of suffering quicker than those who have no concentration. So you know that, in order to realise the Dhamma, you need to develop concentration. However, if you don't develop concentration, if you are lazy and find excuses not to practise, and if you are attached to your home and don't want to leave it, then how can you realise the Dhamma? So it depends on how much effort you apply in your practice. Therefore, maybe a hundred lives, maybe a thousand lives, maybe more, or maybe just three or

Rebirth in the Deva Realm
Or in the Human World – Which Is Better?

four lives – all these scenarios are possible. It all depends on you.

After this existence, some may be reborn in the deva realm, or some may be reborn into the human world again, or some may fall into the four woeful states. Now I will not talk about those who are going to fall into the four woeful states; I will talk about those who will be reborn in a good realm, such as the deva realm or the human realm.

There are those who take rebirth in the deva realm and in the human realm because of wholesome kamma, such as *dāna* and *sīla*. They obtain the opportunity to be reborn in the deva realm and in the human realm with the support of the wholesome kamma of *dāna* and *sīla*. This is one way they can be reborn in the deva realm and in the human realm.

Another type of person is reborn in the deva realm or in the human realm due to the support of meditation practice. They practise meditation in this life. Having developed concentration, they proceed to insight meditation. Seeing the arising and perishing of conditioned dhamma, they can contemplate impermanence, suffering, and non-self. If they are able to maintain this practice at the near-death moment in this existence, they don't need to worry, no matter whether they are reborn in the deva realm or in the human realm again, because they have the influence of their practice of the Dhamma up to the time of the near-death moment. In the deva realm they will meet with many of their Dhamma friends, and they will be reminded of how to proceed and to con-

tinue practising meditation. In the human realm also their Dhamma practice will cause them to meet with the true teachings of the Buddha.

However, if you go to the deva realm with just dāna and sīla, it is risky, because there is a lot of sensuality in the deva realm. The sensual enjoyment in the deva realm is so powerful that you will forget about the practice. Therefore, go there not just with dāna and sīla; go there with dāna and sīla, and also with the support of meditation practice. This will be very good.

At least while the true teachings of the Buddha are still flourishing, after having developed concentration, if you practise to know and to see the First Noble Truth (which is ultimate mentality and materiality) and the Second Noble Truth (which are causes and their effects), you will not be separated from the teachings of the Buddha in the future. You need this much realisation at the very least. Furthermore, if you continue on and attain the first Path and Fruition Knowledges, you will be able to make an end of suffering in seven existences at most.

Which Realm Is Best in Saṃsāra?

Question: Through the round of saṃsāra, which is the best realm to be reborn into? Which is most conducive for practice? I read that some devas are still fighting. On the other hand, as the Buddha gave His first discourse, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, only one human, the ascetic Koṇḍañña, penetrated the Dhamma, but one hundred and eighty

Which Realm Is Best in Samsāra?

million devas and brahmās penetrated the Dhamma. It seems that they have superior intellectual power compared to humans. Is that so?

Answer: There are many who are reborn in the celestial realms due to their acts of offering or due to their practice of morality. They are born there without the support of meditation practice. They desire to be reborn in the celestial realms to enjoy divine sensual pleasure. Divine sensual pleasure is vastly superior to what humans experience. For that reason, most beings become heedless while dwelling in the celestial realms. Rebirth in either the celestial realms or the brahmā realms is good only for those who have successfully practised meditation as humans. The lifespan of such beings is so very, very long that they may encounter a future Buddha. Also, they find many Dhamma friends in the celestial realms – ‘birds of a feather flock together’. So they will meet there and remind each other not to be heedless and to practise meditation.

When our Gotama Buddha expounded His first discourse, the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, those devas and brahmās who penetrated the Dhamma had practised meditation in the past. That’s why they were heedful. They came down and met with the Buddha in order to listen to the Dhamma. And then they realised the Dhamma according to their practices and past accumulated pāramī.

It is similar for those who have successfully practised samatha and vipassanā but have not yet attained Path and Fruition Knowledges. Since they have deeply realised the Dhamma as they really are to a

certain extent, that Dhamma will remind them not to forget their practice and their realisation wherever they are reborn.

Sensuality in the Deva Realm: Where to Be Reborn?

Question: In Bhante's book, Bhante wrote that every deva has five hundred nymphs. Each male deva is accompanied by five hundred female deities. But to be reborn in the deva realm, one must keep eight precepts. To be able to uphold the eight precepts for rebirth in the deva realm seems to imply that the result of abstaining from sensual enjoyment is to gain much greater indulgence in sensuality. This is hard to fathom. In addition, for the first Noble person, the Sotāpanna, the desire between male and female still exists. For example, Sakka, the king of the devas, has two and a half million nymphs surrounding him. Sakka is already a Sotāpanna. This is really hard to understand.

Answer: Not all devas have five hundred nymphs.

Abstention from sensuality is not the cause for obtaining a vastly superior sensuality. The devas are reborn in that realm as a result of the wholesome kamma that appeared at the near-death moment of their previous life.

The human realm is where we encounter both dukkha (suffering) and sukha (happiness). Human birth is the result of a wholesome cause. But after being born as humans and living a human life, we encounter both good and bad. By contrast, hell beings suf-

Sensuality in the Deva Realm: Where to Be Reborn?

fer greatly. Their rebirth is the result of an unwholesome cause. They do not experience any sukha at all but encounter only dukkha – complete suffering. For humans, there is suffering and there is happiness, whereas celestial beings experience nothing but happiness. Theirs is the realm where beings encounter happiness according to their good kamma. The human realm is where we encounter both dukkha and sukha. Hell beings encounter only suffering. Where do you want to be?

Because the human realm is also a sensual realm, those who have realised the Dhamma as they really are know and see the dukkha that characterises the human realm. But the sense pleasure of the human realm is inferior to that of the celestial realms. For that reason, human beings who see the faults and dangers of sensuality don't want to be reborn in either the human realm or the celestial realms. However, humans with strong attachment to sense pleasure want to be reborn in the celestial realms, whose sense pleasure incomparably excels the pleasure of the human realm.

Some of my disciples have realised the Dhamma as they really are. I have asked them, 'If you can't make an end of suffering in this very life, where would you want to be reborn?' They have replied, 'I don't want to be reborn as a human again; humans experience a lot of suffering. Here there is both dukkha and sukha. There is a lot of competition in this world. I don't want to be reborn in the celestial realms either. The unsurpassed sense pleasure there is overwhelming. I would like to be reborn in the brahmā realm.' This is their choice. Why? Because they have the ca-

pability to make the choice. They can enter jhāna absorption concentration and practise jhāna mastery, so they can also enter jhāna absorption concentration and remain there up to the moment they die.

Therefore, it depends on your choice. In turn, your choice depends on your capability. If you don't have such capability, how can you be reborn in the brahmā realm? In that case you have only three options: the deva realms, the human realm, or the four woeful states. Where do you want to go?

Coming into This Life With Pāramī and Practising

Question: Bhante mentioned earlier that we all come into this life having accumulated pāramī from the past. It is just a matter of whether we have accumulated a lot of pāramī or just a little pāramī, but we all come into this life having accumulated pāramī. However, if we have not met with the true teachings of the Buddha, then this accumulated pāramī will collapse. I am very happy then that today I have met with the true teachings of the Buddha, but I had to come a long way to reach this stage. Moreover, this opportunity to meet with the true Dhamma is built upon some suffering that my family members have had to go through, but now I have received security and stability from the true teachings of the Buddha. This is my first time in a retreat. I have received meditation guidance before but I was not clear. Now I have learned more – not a lot yet, but I am learning. Bhante mentioned just now that, in our lives, we have to remain mindful

and wait for the right time to come, for the time to ripen. I am very touched to hear this. Only this afternoon I was asking myself why we need to meditate. It seems we need to meditate in order to maintain mindfulness and to continue to accumulate pāramī, in order that we might wait for the time to ripen. We should therefore continue to maintain mindfulness, to do good, and to avoid evil. I would like to check if my understanding is correct.

Answer: What I meant earlier was not that everyone who comes into this existence has accumulated good pāramī. Recently I have told all of you that in this retreat I have met with some who could see the light and who could focus on the light. Such practitioners have come into this existence with good pāramī. However, not everyone who comes into this existence has accumulated good pāramī. All humans are born as humans because of good kamma that gives its results at the near-death moment in their previous life. This is the way you should understand the difference. Since this retreat is a short one, those who cannot see the light or cannot get good results shouldn't think that they lack good pāramī. This is just a short retreat. They need to continue practising meditation.

Another thing to consider is that the purpose of practising meditation is to know the truth. Due to not knowing the truth and not seeing the truth, all the people in the world have a lot of confusion and a lot of doubt, and their vision is not clear. For that reason, in order to know and to see the truth, we all need to engage in meditation practice. This is the purpose of practising meditation.

Those who can't engage in meditation practice need to study the Dhamma. They should listen to the Dhamma, they should read the Dhamma, and they should live with the Dhamma. They should be mindful, and they should find time to practise meditation every day, waiting for a time when they will be able to engage in meditation practice full time. If we keep mindfully doing good deeds in our daily life, the time may ripen so that we will engage in practising meditation for the realisation of Nibbāna in this very life.

However, as you all know, doing good is not something that is going to happen automatically. You need to be determined to do good. If you don't try to do wholesome deeds, and if you are not determined to practise meditation, you will instead spend most of your time doing other things – things which are unwholesome. In this manner, the time will not ripen if you just go on choosing the familiar way. However, the time will ripen if you choose the unfamiliar way and become determined.

Keeping the Mind Wholesome in Daily Life

Question: According to the Abhidhamma, among all types of consciousness, the most beautiful mind is the one that is accompanied by joy, associated with wisdom, and unprompted. My question is: In our daily life, how do we let this most beautiful mind arise continuously? And how is our current practice of cultivating concentration related to this most beautiful mind?

Answer: ‘*Pāpasmim ramatī mano*’ – ‘The mind delights in evil.’³⁸ Our mind inclines towards the unwholesome any time we are not doing wholesome actions. Do you agree? How then should we conduct ourselves in daily life?

Whenever wholesome kamma is accumulated, mindfulness is the leading factor. To be able to do wholesome deeds all the time, we need to be mindful all the time. Being mindful means to engage in doing good deeds. If we are not doing good, we will be doing bad.

There are only two things we can do in life – what we should do and what we shouldn’t do. Nothing else. If we are doing what we should, we are not doing what we shouldn’t. If we are doing what we shouldn’t, we are not doing what we should. Therefore, to be able to do what is wholesome, or what we should do, we should be mindful. If you are focusing on the in-breath and the out-breath, you are being mindful. Without being mindful, you can’t do that. To be able to make an offering, you need to be mindful. Without being mindful, you can’t do that either. To be able to observe precepts, you need to be mindful. If you are unmindful, you will break your precepts. Therefore we need to be mindful, to let such wholesome states of mind arise in us as constantly as possible.

³⁸ Dhṛ. 116:

Abhūtharetha kalyāṇe, pāpā cittaṃ nivāraye.

Dandhañhi karoto puññaṃ, pāpasmim ramatī mano.

Hasten to do good; restrain your mind from evil.

He who is slow in doing good, his mind delights in evil.’

Some of my disciples have succeeded in practising meditation well and in knowing and seeing ultimate mentality and materiality. Then they were taught to discern ultimate reality both internally and externally. Then they reported to me, saying, 'Bhante, the minds of us humans are almost always unwholesome.' This is so because we do not have wise attention. Wise attention can really be developed only when you know and see ultimate reality. If you don't know and see ultimate reality, you have unwise attention for the most part so you will accumulate a lot of unwholesome kamma. Your mind is then not a beautiful mind, but an ugly mind.

The best way for all of you to practise now is to observe the precepts. Without this, it will be very difficult.

How to Replace Old Patterns with New Ones

Question: I have just started to see the truth that I can really follow, but only very recently, about two years ago. I am now twenty-three. For nineteen years people kept telling me what to do and how to think. Having experienced some of the ups and downs of life, there is something that I understand intellectually about the truth. Sometimes, however, there are little things that remain from the habitual patterns of those nineteen years of my life; they are still there. Even though these things are not really there, I can't help but feel some anxiety. The pattern is still there, and it creates unnecessary and convoluted thoughts within what is otherwise clear thinking. So my question would be: How can I establish a

new pattern of mind and completely eradicate the old pattern that is coming from the past, that I don't agree with, and that I want to get rid of?

Answer: The education we have received since we were young influences our mind, our thoughts, and our way of thinking very much. This is normal. However, you need nothing more than the use of your rational mind; with that, you can now start a journey to know what you should do by comparing what you have learned against what you are now learning. Depending on your wisdom and your rational mind, you are making a new journey. Still, you are not as firmly rooted in the knowledge as you should be, so sometimes the knowledge and education you received in the past will work against you. Please accept that. You need to differentiate and distinguish between what belongs to this new pattern and what belongs to that old pattern. If you can distinguish between these, it will be enough. Later, if you come to know that that is what you don't need to practise and this is what you do need to practise, you need to act on your knowledge and engage in practising what you need to practice. This becomes your new habit. You need to replace old habits with new habits. Practice makes perfect. As you have spent a long time, nineteen years, with that old pattern, it will be with you like a latent defilement, like something that lies hidden. It may sometimes pop up and come up to the surface of the mind. If you can distinguish which type of pattern is which, I think it will be enough for now. However, to be able to make a complete change, you need to acquire direct knowledge. Direct knowledge is the single most important power for you to be able to understand

what the truth is. Direct knowledge can make you change. You cannot be changed by anyone or anything external; you can change only by means of your insight knowledge, your own direct knowledge. This is how you should take the next step forward. This will be another step forward for you.

Changing an Old Pattern into a New Pattern

Question: I want to ask about changing an old pattern into a new pattern. Bhante mentioned that by repeated doing, we can replace old patterns with new patterns. Is this replacement of old patterns related to habitual tendencies?

Answer: What I have explained to all of you is that we should improve as much as we can and in a way that we should. We may have many old patterns still lying hidden. If we are not mindful, they come up to the surface of the mind; but if we are mindful, we can adopt the new pattern. Old patterns are due to our habits, our past kamma, our temperament, and sometimes our tendencies. These are influencing us very much, but if we don't improve in the present, it is impossible to change. We need to find ways to improve. Old patterns will disturb you and influence you, so you must be mindful, and you should ignore them. Engage in and promote the new pattern. This is what we need to do. If we don't train ourselves, we will be not much different from animals.

Therefore, we all need to improve. We all have been born many times as animals in the animal realm. That's why we all have animal nature. If we don't

train ourselves and instead do everything freely, we will continue to behave like animals.

Requirements of a Qualified Teacher

Question: If we want to attain Arahantship, to attain the four Path and Fruition Knowledges, we need to practise under the guidance of a qualified teacher. What are the requirements for such a teacher? Do we all have to go to Pa-Auk Forest Monastery? Or is it still possible to become an Arahant in other places?

Answer: The Buddha is the best teacher. If you meet with the Buddha, this would be best. If you can't meet with the Buddha, the second best option is to learn from an Arahant. If you can't meet with an Arahant, then an Anāgāmi, the third Noble person, is the third best person to have as your teacher. If you can't meet with an Anāgāmi, then a Sakadāgāmi, the second Noble person, would be very good. If you can't meet with a Sakadāgāmi, then a Sotāpanna, the first Noble person, would be a very good teacher for you. If you can't meet with a Sotāpanna, the one who knows all three piṭaka, the one who knows two piṭaka, the one who knows one piṭaka, the one who knows five nikāya, the one who knows four nikāya, three nikāya, two nikāya, one nikāya, in that order, would be a good teacher for you.

Here, however, we need knowledge in the practical sense, according to the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha said in the Kūṭāgāra Sutta:

If anyone should say, ‘Without having built the foundation as a base, I will erect the upper part of the building,’ this would be impossible. If another person should say, ‘After having built the foundation as a base, I will erect the upper storey of a peaked house,’ this would be possible. In the same way, if anyone should say, ‘Without having made the breakthrough to the Four Noble Truths, I will make an end of suffering,’ it will be impossible. And in the same way, if anyone should say, ‘After having made a breakthrough to the Four Noble Truths, I will make an end of suffering,’ it will be possible.³⁹

This is the Buddha’s explanation to His disciples. If it is so, let me ask you one question: Who will know, who will see the Four Noble Truths? Yes, the one with concentration will know and see the Four Noble Truths. ‘*Samādhiṃ, bhikkhave, bhāvētha. Samāhito, bhikkhave, bhikkhu yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*’ – ‘Bhikkhus, develop concentration. The one who is concentrated knows and sees things as they really are.’⁴⁰ In other words, one who is concentrated knows and sees the Four Noble Truths as they really are.

If you are not yet an Arahant, and you want to be at least a Sotāpanna, you need to develop concentration. If you want to acquire learning and knowledge for the realisation of the Dhamma as they really are,

³⁹ SN.V.12.5.4 Kūṭāgārasuttaṃ (SN 56.44 The Discourse on the Peaked House).

⁴⁰ SN.V.12.1.1 Samādhisuttaṃ (SN 56.1 The Discourse on Concentration).

Requirements of a Qualified Teacher

and for the realisation of the Four Noble Truths as they really are, you need to find a teacher who can guide you in developing concentration. You need at least access concentration, but absorption concentration would be even better.

As I have already shared with all of you in my Dhamma talk, those who want to be pure insight practitioners need to start with four elements meditation. Don't forget this. This is the beginning of vipassanā, of knowing and seeing ultimate materiality. If you practise four elements meditation, you will attain access concentration. Thus it is not true that those who want to be pure insight practitioners do not need concentration. True, they do not attain absorption concentration, but they attain access concentration by practising four elements meditation. Only then can they continue to break their body down into small particles. If someone can teach you this, you can learn from that teacher. Such a teacher can be considered a qualified teacher from the standpoint of actual practice.

One who is concentrated will know and see the Four Noble Truths. You can learn from any teachers who can teach you to know and to see the Four Noble Truths. If there are teachers who can teach you how to know and how to see the Four Noble Truths, no matter where they are, you can learn from them and attain Path and Fruition wherever such teachers are found. If they live and teach in America, people living in America can benefit from them. If such teachers are found in China, it will be beneficial for people in China. If there are no such teachers in Taiwan, in America, in China, or in Vietnam, and if

they are only available at Pa-Auk, then you should go to Pa-Auk.

Rejection of Abhidhamma

Question: Bhante said that to check whether or not a teaching is true Dhamma, we need to compare it with the Tipiṭaka – the Suttanta, the Vinaya, and the Abhidhamma. But I recently heard from an ordained person that he refused to learn the Abhidhamma because the Abhidhamma is not the teaching of the Buddha. He said that before the Buddha's Parinibbāna, the Buddha said that only the Dhamma and the Vinaya would be our teacher. So if an ordained person has such wrong view, lay people like us may follow the wrong way.

Answer: What is the first insight knowledge? The first insight knowledge is the knowledge of discerning ultimate mentality and materiality – in Pāli, *nāmarūpaparicchedañāṇa*. The Vinaya, the Abhidhamma, and the Suttanta are the three baskets, the Tipiṭaka, of the Buddha's teaching. In the Suttanta, the discourses, the Buddha explained the Dhamma according to the inclination of the audience. The Buddha was supremely skilful in teaching the Dhamma. He would choose the right words to say to the right persons. The Buddha profoundly understood how to teach, when to teach, and whom to teach. Discerning the capability, the inclination, and the pāramī of individual persons, the Buddha would expound the Dhamma in the way each person could understand. Such expositions of the Dhamma are what is recorded in the Suttanta.

But in the Abhidhamma, there is no such focus on any particular beings. It imparts the truth that is universal truth. Only the Abhidhamma deals with such comprehensive truth, analysing all the possibilities and impossibilities of mentality and materiality that different beings can possess. The Buddha analysed all the mentality and materiality that can possibly arise in a certain being according to the realm and according to the particular being. In humans, the number of materialities subsists in twenty-eight types of rūpa, but since men and women each possess only the male sex-decade kalāpa or the female sex-decade kalāpa respectively, each human being possesses twenty-seven types of rūpa. To attain *rūpa-pariggaha-ñāna*, the knowledge of discerning ultimate materiality, we need to discern all twenty-eight types of rūpa, both internally and externally. If we fail to discern them, then we fail to discern ultimate materiality, numbering twenty-eight types of rūpa altogether. Lacking such discernment, can we be said to attain the knowledge of discerning ultimate materiality?

What about mentality? The Buddha taught eighty-nine types of citta and fifty-two kinds of cetasika. He also taught rūpa jhāna-dhamma and arūpa jhāna-dhamma. All the *akusala citta* (unwholesome citta) and *kāmāvacara kusala citta* (sensual wholesome citta) will arise in all of us. Hence, when you feel greedy and want something or crave something, the mentalities that arise will number twenty altogether if it is associated with pleasant feeling. When you get what you want, you feel happy, don't you? Who taught this? Where you can find this teaching? Only in the Abhidhamma. The Buddha has counted the number

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of mentalities that may arise in our minds. If the mind state is associated with *pīti*, it will be twenty. Sometimes you get what you want, but you don't feel happy. The Buddha said sometimes *lobha* arises without *pīti*, in which case the total mentality in the mind is nineteen. Who can teach this? Only the Buddha, and only in the *Abhidhamma*.

The Buddha said in the *Abhidhamma* that this whole world is made up of very small particles. Where did the Buddha say this? In the *Abhidhamma*. When you practically engage in four elements meditation, at a certain time you will break your body down into very small particles. If you pay attention with four elements meditation to living and non-living things, both internally and externally, you will see that everything around you is just tiny particles. The Buddha said there is no man, there is no woman. There are no living or non-living things. There are only very small particles. The Buddha said that, to be able to see them, you need to practise four elements meditation. When you practise four elements meditation, you will develop concentration. When you develop concentration, your body will emit light. If you continue discerning four elements in your whole body, it becomes a block of bright light. If you continue to discern four elements in the block of bright light, you will break it down into its components. You will break the block of bright light down into very tiny particles. At that time, you will agree with the Buddha. You will not argue with the Buddha.

The Buddha said that the very small particles are not yet ultimate materiality. They are just the small-

est concepts. You need to analyse the ultimate materiality existing in each particle, such as earth, water, fire, wind, colour, smell, taste, nutritive essence, life faculty, and sensitivities. According to the Buddha's Abhidhamma, in the eye door there are eye-sensitivity decade kalāpa, body-sensitivity decade kalāpa, male or female sex decade kalāpa, as well as mind-born materiality, nutriment-born materiality, temperature-born materiality, and life nonad kalāpa. Seven kinds of rūpa exist in the eye door.

Now I will let you reflect and let you understand whether what the Buddha taught is really true or not. When you look at something and see it, why do you see it? Because you have eye-sensitivity. Visible objects can impinge on the eye-sensitivity. Only at that time will seeing consciousness, or eye consciousness, arise. Please touch your eye. Do you feel the touch? Why? Because there is body-sensitivity. Do you see the differences between the eyes of a female and the eyes of a male? They are different! You may have been unaware of the difference before now, but they are different! This is because of female *bhāva rūpa* (sex materiality) or male *bhāva rūpa* in their respective eyes. When a man looks at a man, when a female looks at a male, when a male looks at a female, when a female looks at a female, you will see the difference. Why is there a difference? Because of *bhāva rūpa*. The way men move, the way men act, and the way women move and act – are they the same? The Buddha said that the female *bhāva rūpa* spreads throughout the body of the female. Male *bhāva rūpa* exists throughout the body of the male. So it is different. It distinguishes the appearance and the actions of a male from a female.

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This difference is due to bhāva rūpa. Bhāva rūpa exist in every door. Where can you find this teaching? Only in the Abhidhamma.

Until less than two hundred years ago, scientists regarded the atom as the smallest unit of materiality. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, scientists acquired the ability to split an atom into neutrons, protons, and electrons. Neutrons, protons, and electrons are called sub-atomic particles. Scientists could split the atom into protons, neutrons, and electrons only at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Long before that, the Buddha had discerned that the whole world is made up of very small particles. He had done so without instruments, without a laboratory, and only with His concentration. How long ago? Two thousand six hundred years ago. What is the molecular formula of drinking water? H_2O . Two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom. This is what the scientists say. The Buddha said water is made up of eight kinds of materiality. The Buddha's analysis went further and deeper than does that of scientists, even in the absence of any instruments. Scientists cannot analyse ultimate materiality. They just know materiality in a superficial way. All these teachings of ultimate reality appear in the Abhidhamma.

In Thailand, there are groups which reject the Abhidhamma and the commentaries. Among ordained persons, one group does not accept the Abhidhamma and the commentaries. Another group accepts the Abhidhamma and the commentaries. For this reason, conflict arises. The commentaries ex-

plain how to practise meditation, and how to know and see the Dhamma deeply as they really are. Before you study the Abhidhamma, please read the teachings of the Buddha in the Suttanta. Then study the Abhidhamma thoroughly. After that, read the suttas again, and you'll find that your understanding has changed completely.

Because of the Abhidhamma, the Buddha is called the Omniscient One. If you ignore the Abhidhamma teachings and read just the Suttanta, you don't see how special the Buddha's knowledge is. The Suttanta alone does not convey such profound understanding. In the Abhidhamma, however, the knowledge is very deep and profound. No ordinary people could formulate it. Only an Omniscient Buddha could do that. If you study Abhidhamma thoroughly, you will realise how deep and how profound the knowledge of the Buddha is.

Do you know the Maṅgala Sutta? There is a sentence in it that reads, '*Asevanā ca bālānaṃ, paṇḍitānaṃca sevā*' – 'Please don't associate with fools; please associate with the wise.'⁴¹ Those ordained bhikkhus who reject the Abhidhamma are very unfortunate. This problem occurs because of their teachers, because those bhikkhus associate with teachers who don't really understand the teachings of the Buddha. Under the influence of their teachers, they continue on their way, not knowing that what their teachers are teaching is not in accordance with the Buddha's teachings. In this way, without

⁴¹ Khuddakapāṭhapāli Khp. 5 Maṅgalasuttaṃ (Khuddakapāṭha Sutta 5 The Discourse on Blessings).

bad intentions, they have inadvertently associated with fools. Along these lines, in a certain existence when the bodhisatta was fulfilling pāramī, he made an aspiration and said, ‘May I not meet with a fool. May I not hear from a fool. May I not associate with a fool. If I need to converse with a fool, may I not take delight in his speech, and may I not follow and act according to his speech.’⁴² This is very important! We all should make this aspiration. And the bodhisatta continued his aspiration as follows: ‘May I meet with the wise. May I hear from the wise. May I associate with the wise. May I converse with the wise and take delight in his speech, and may I follow and act according to the instructions of the wise.’⁴³ This also is very good and very important.

Sometimes we are not ready to listen to the wise. This is something that happens with all of us in life. Often we meet with fools, we speak with them, and we enjoy speaking with them. Sometimes we meet with the wise, but we feel doubt. We look at the wise with strange eyes. We think, ‘My point of view and his point of view are not the same. What is he saying?’ Rooted in your ego, you want to deny, you want to disagree, you want to object, you want to oppose. Hence we all need to be careful. We all need to be wise. We all need to make an aspiration like the one the bodhisatta made in one of his existences.

⁴² Jātakapāli Jā.XIII.480 Akittijātakam (Jātaka 480 The Birth Story of Akitti): ‘Bālam na passe na suṇe, na ca bālena saṃvase. Bālenallāpa sallāpam, na kare na ca rocaye.’

⁴³ Same as previous: ‘Dhīraṃ passe suṇe dhīraṃ, dhīrena saha saṃvase. Dhīrenallāpasallāpam, taṃ kare tañca rocaye.’

In the Theragāthāpāli there is one stanza that reads, ‘Who knows, *knows* who knows. Who knows *knows* who doesn’t know. Who doesn’t know *doesn’t know* who doesn’t know. Who doesn’t know *doesn’t know* who knows.’⁴⁴ Which are you – the one who *knows*, or the one who *doesn’t know*? Remember, then: Who doesn’t know *doesn’t know* who doesn’t know. Who doesn’t know *doesn’t know* who knows.

Making Sense of the Kālāma Sutta

Question: In connection with ‘who knows *knows* who knows’ and the rest, there is the famous discussion in the Kālāma Sutta between the Buddha and the Kālāmas. They were asking how they could know for sure what was true. The Buddha said you should not believe something just because it’s tradition or because a teacher said it and so forth. From this advice, many derived the popular conclusion that the Buddha taught that you should only accept what makes sense to you. On this point, I am reminded of your German student who said, ‘It is wholesome because I like it.’ Likewise, for many people, only what they like, or what appeals to their emotions, makes sense to them, instead of what appeals to their reasoning. So who is actually in a position to know what makes sense to begin with? If I say that it makes sense because I like it, then it does not make sense.

⁴⁴ Theragāthāpāli Th.I.7.1 Vappattheragātha (Theragāthā Stanza 61 - Sayings of the Elder Vappa):

Passati passo passantam, apassantañca passati.
Apassanto apassantam, passantañca na passati.

Answer: The Kālāma Sutta⁴⁵ was taught for many reasons. Many spiritual teachers would go to that village, and every single one of them would say, ‘What I am teaching is right; all the other teachings are wrong.’ All the teachers who went there complained about all the other teachers. Each of them looked down on the others and found fault with them. Each insisted that only his teaching was right. Therefore, when the Buddha went there, He enlightened them, saying, ‘You should feel doubtful about something that is doubtful. When you know for yourself what is wholesome and what is unwholesome, please pursue what is wholesome and act accordingly.’ The Buddha said, ‘Don’t accept something because of tradition, or because it is handed down from one generation to another, or because it is in a text, or because the one telling you about it is someone you respect.’ These are the words the Buddha shared with them because of the conditions they were encountering.

The teaching of the Buddha is reasonable. So when we hear the teaching of the Buddha, we see that He never forced anyone to believe Him. He just explained the Dhamma, which explains cause and effect, which in turn is reasonable. He simply explained what is true, what is untrue, what is wholesome, what is unwholesome, what should be done, and what shouldn’t be done.

⁴⁵ AN.III.2.(7)2.5 Kesamuttisuttaṃ, or Kālāmasuttaṃ (AN 3.65 The Discourse Concerning the Kesaputtiyā, or the Discourse Concerning the Kālāmas, also known as the Kālāma Sutta).

We love the Dhamma. Why? Not because the Buddha expounded it, but because, on account of the Dhamma, we can reason according to our wisdom, according to our knowledge, and according to our understanding. As the Buddha said, ‘Nothing happens without causes.’ We get the opportunity to hear the Dhamma because of causes. It means that we have accumulated wholesome kamma related to the teachings of the Buddha in the past. Therefore, when we hear the Dhamma, we don’t find it very difficult to listen to and accept the teachings of the Buddha. For this reason, among those who get the opportunity to hear the Dhamma, there may be some who love the teachings of the Buddha very much, and there may be some who are still enquiring, still considering, still reflecting, and still thinking about whether what they have heard is really true or not. Because of differences in accumulated past kamma, the experience of encountering the Dhamma in this life will be different for each person. We don’t need to find fault with anyone. Why? Because these things will be different according to each person’s circumstances.

Who then is responsible for deciding what is good and what is bad? No one is responsible. Differences in the way we grew up and the education we have received since we were young account for the differences in our points of view, our attitudes, and our way of thinking. Likewise, when we hear the true teaching of the Buddha, which is reasonable, which we can apply in our daily lives, and which we can use for our happiness, there occurs something like the question about the conflict between old habit patterns and new habit patterns. These two may

conflict in the beginning, but when you know more of the Dhamma, you can distinguish between old patterns and new patterns.

So if you want to make your new patterns strong, you need to practise them repeatedly. Only then will the new patterns replace the old patterns. However, any new pattern should be analysed to see whether or not it is what you should follow and practise. You need to analyse it without relying on your likes or dislikes. Relying on your likes and dislikes does nothing but strengthen the defilements.

While seeking the Dhamma, you should reflect as follows: ‘Am I following my likes and dislikes and basing my actions on them? Am I acting according to my defilements?’ You should not act according to your defilements. This is indulging the mind. Instead, you should be rational; you should reflect on your inclination and on what causes us to act according to our likes and dislikes. You should consider if it is really good or not. We should examine all these things constantly.

Chanda Versus Tanhā

Question: What is the difference between *chanda* and *tanhā*? If someone has a desire to swiftly attain the putting down of the burden, is this *chanda* or *tanhā*? The interpretations in some books are very similar.

Answer: *Chanda* is the mere wish for something to be. *Tanhā* is craving and attachment. If you practise meditation with the desire to improve – in other

words, if you practise with expectations – your mind will not be calm. The mind that desires is not calm, nor is the mind that expects.

We need desire and expectations to make a living. We make our living motivated by greed and expectations. In meditation practice, we need to have no desire and no expectations, because the meditation object is not associated with either desire or expectations. The meditation object is associated with wisdom and mindfulness. Mindfulness can be developed only when the mind is calm. Wisdom grows only when the mind is calm. When the mind is calm, we need strong *chanda*, pure wishes. Suppose you are practising ānāpānasati meditation, you need strong *chanda* to be with the in-breath and outbreath. *Chanda* is mere wishing. Desire is the opposite. Desire becomes a hindrance in your practice. It makes your mind un-calm and impure and disturbs your meditation. If a practitioner has the desire to keep improving, we can check whether their effort is based on desire, or whether it is based on mere wishes. If they are putting in a lot of effort, it will be based on expectation and desire.

As I told all of you, desire and expectations make your mind un-calm. Your mind becomes active due to strong desire. A lot of desire and an active mind will cause you to make a great deal of effort, which is unnecessary. This is caused by desire and expectation rooted in greed.

Here, the *chanda* that we need in meditation is not related to desire or to expectation rooted in greed. It is just the mere wishing for wholesome objects. The

chanda here refers to the associated mental factor that arises in wholesome states of mind when we practise meditation and do wholesome actions. It may or may not be associated with wisdom, but it is always associated with wholesome states of mind, which are free from desire rooted in greed, and expectations rooted in greed. The mental factor of *chanda* may also arise in unwholesome states of mind rooted in greed or anger. Here, *chanda* is the desire for unwholesome objects and is not what we need. The sort of *chanda* that we need when we do kusala kamma and meditation practices is the *chanda* that arises in wholesome states of mind. Greed, desire, and expectation are states of mind in which unwholesome desire arises in all of you. In this way, these two states are not the same.

Renunciation and the Balance Between Duties and the Wish to Renounce

Question: When the bodhisatta renounced the world, his son had just been born. The bodhisatta was also the heir to the throne. Suppose that, after he left, the country became a mess and was ruined because of his absence, and suppose also that his son failed to receive a good upbringing; how could he then go back to face all these consequences? I ask this question because nowadays many lay people have intentions to renounce but they have their family, parents, spouses, and children. So how do they balance this wish to renounce with their duties and responsibilities towards their family?

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Answer: Good question. I think you are worried that someone among your beloved ones is going to renounce.

Yes, many people think about this. How could the bodhisatta do this? He was destined to be a Buddha. When the time was ripe, no one could have prevented his renunciation. Instead of hindering him, all the things happening around him acted as driving forces for his renunciation and eventual Enlightenment.

At the age of twenty-nine, the bodhisatta had his wife, his son, and his kingdom. His father, King Suddhodana, encountered difficulties when the bodhisatta renounced the world. The king suffered very much over losing his beloved son. His son was destined to be a universal monarch too. If the bodhisatta hadn't chosen the way to Enlightenment, he was destined to become a universal monarch instead. Thus King Suddhodana lost not only a son but also a universal monarch and an heir who would take over his throne. Thus, when the bodhisatta renounced the world, his father suffered very much. Yet Suddhodana regarded that suffering as utterly insignificant after he attained Enlightenment through the teachings of his son, the Buddha.

Moreover, the bodhisatta's son, Rāhula, became a monk and later also became a Noble person. Many of the bodhisatta's relatives, even his sisters and brothers, ordained afterwards and followed the Buddha, and many of them realised the Dhamma as they really are. They had successfully crossed over to the other shore, where there is true peace and no

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dukkha. All these things were possible because the bodhisatta chose the way he had to choose; and he had to choose that way because he was destined to be a Buddha and because he was destined to teach many sentient beings who had been born with great pāramī.

If the bodhisatta hadn't renounced the world, how would we have been able to hear such beautiful, profound, and precious Dhamma? How would we have been able to practice for our liberation? His renunciation was indeed very great!

If I hadn't renounced the world, how could I have met with all of you now? How could I have taught you the Dhamma?

Whoever is ready to renounce the world, let them renounce. Whoever is not ready, no one can force them. Even if I wanted you to ordain now, would you be ready? No one can force you.

Regarding the question on how to balance between fulfilling our duties and choosing the way to liberation, the terms of the question and the question itself are the result of a particular point of view. If we have sons and daughters, it is reasonable to insist on fulfilling our responsibilities towards them. This is what our reasoning tells us -- we should, you should. Reason is what we think due to conditions.

But when a sense of urgency arises in your mind, it is very powerful – so powerful that no one can stop you. When the sense of urgency arises, please do not stop. It will be for the good of many. It may not be

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for the good of your close family members at that time, but in the long run it will not only be for the good of your close family members but also for the good of many people in the world.

If the Buddha hadn't appeared in the world, this world would be completely dark. Do you know this? Now all the people in the world are living their lives and spending their time in the dark. They are soundly asleep in the dark. Even though there is daylight during the day and electric light at night, there is no real light, no actual light, because the darkness in the heart cannot be expelled by daylight or electric light. Only the light of the Dhamma can dispel the darkness that exists deep inside each individual's heart. Hence, in order for the Dhamma to appear, the bodhisatta had to renounce the world. In the same way, not only did the wise renounce the world in ancient times, in the time of the Buddha, but they renounce it in the present day as well. Therefore, those who are destined to do for the good of many, let them renounce. Don't stop them.

Why Didn't the Buddha Encourage The Attainment of Buddhahood?

Question: Bhante mentioned that during the Buddha's time, many of His great disciples and many other disciples attained to Path and Fruition very quickly. However, it is so good to attain Buddhahood. Why didn't the Buddha encourage them to attain Buddhahood instead?

Answer: The bodhisatta received a definite prophecy from the Dīpaṅkāra Buddha four incalculable and one hundred thousand aeons ago. At that time, he was Sumedha the hermit. After receiving the definite prophecy, the bodhisatta knew for himself that he was a bodhisatta. This is the nature of bodhisattas; they have no need of anyone to guide them in how to fulfil pāramī. They know for themselves. After receiving definite prophecy, the bodhisatta reflected on the correct order of fulfilling pāramī. The thought occurred in his mind that he should begin to fulfil pāramī by starting with dāna pāramī, sīla pāramī, nekkhamma pāramī, and so forth. This was the order of fulfilling pāramī that occurred to the mind of the bodhisatta after receiving definite prophecy, and this understanding of fulfilling pāramī in the right order appeared by itself.

I will not explain now all the details of fulfilling pāramī. As I have explained to all of you, the bodhisatta renounced the world in his last existence, as Prince Siddhattha, when a sense of urgency arose in his mind. Then he practised meditation. I have explained to all of you the way the Bodhisatta practised so as to attain Full Enlightenment. After he became a Buddha, on his seventh *vassa*, he ascended to the Tāvāṭimsa deva realm to teach the Abhidhamma. Do you remember?

Why did the Buddha ascend to the deva realm to teach the Abhidhamma? He went there to teach His mother. Out of gratitude towards His mother, the Buddha ascended to the Tāvāṭimsa realm to teach her the Abhidhamma so as to repay her for what she had done for Him. Because the Abhidhamma is very

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wide-ranging, very long, and very profound, it is impossible to impart all the Abhidhamma teachings continuously in a single sitting in the human world. The lifespan of the devas and the lifespan of humans are very different; one hundred years of human life is equal to one day in the Tāvāṭimsa deva realm. Can we listen to Dhamma continuously for a hundred years? It is impossible. Therefore, the Buddha chose the Tāvāṭimsa deva realm to teach the Abhidhamma during that rains retreat. As the Buddha was a human, he needed to take His meal every day, so the Buddha would come down to the human realm each day to have His meal. After using psychic power to create His body in the Tāvāṭimsa realm, and making His created body preach the Abhidhamma continuously, He descended again to the human world.

Here I want to cut the story short. After three months, the teaching was finished. At the end of the rains retreat, the Buddha decided to come back down to the human world. The Buddha announced His departure to Sakka, the king of the devas. He took formal leave of the king of the devas by letting him know that He was returning to the world of humans. It was on the full moon day at the end of the rains retreat. The king of the devas created a set of three stairways. One was made of gold, another of ruby, and the third of silver. These three stairways were placed side by side. The golden stairway on the right hand side was reserved for the devas, the silver stairway on the left was for the brahmās, and the ruby stairway in the middle was for the Buddha. In this way, when the Buddha descended from the Tāvāṭimsa realm to the human world, all the hu-

mans, devas, and brahmās could see each other. Devas saw brahmās and humans, brahmās saw devas and humans, and all of them also saw all the hell beings. The humans saw all the brahmās and devas and the beings in the hell realms. Everybody saw each other. This was a miracle wrought by the Buddha. Emanating rays of light in six hues, the Buddha descended from the Tāvāṭimsa realm to the human realm. At that time, there was not a single one in that crowd of spectators, thirty-six yojana in circumference, who did not aspire to attain Buddhahood after witnessing the greatness and glory of the Buddha.

I will repeat it. There was not a single one in that crowd of spectators, thirty-six yojana circumference, who did not aspire to attain Buddhahood when they witnessed the greatness and glory of the Buddha.

You too may have been among that crowd. Do you think so?

For my own part, I don't think I was. Had I been in that crowd, I would already have made an end of suffering. I don't think I would be here meeting with you now. Are you aware that those who get the opportunity to meet a living Buddha have fulfilled great pāramī? Under the direct guidance of a living Buddha, most people with such pāramī would make an end of suffering. Therefore, I think you were probably somewhere else at that time. Suppose we were in that crowd of people and saw the Buddha's greatness and glory, and suppose we made an aspiration to attain Buddhahood, what do you think? Would it be certain that we would become Buddhas?

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You might answer that it would be possible after accumulating pāramī for four incalculable and one hundred thousand aeons. Even after four incalculable and one hundred thousand aeons, it is still not possible for everyone who aspires to be a Buddha to be able to do so. It is possible only for those who have received a definite prophecy from a living Buddha. When people saw the greatness and glory of the Gotama Buddha as He was descending from the Tāvātimsa realm to the human realm, there was no one among them who did not aspire to attain Buddhahood, because it was a rare opportunity to witness the appearance of a living Buddha. However, none of them was qualified to become a Buddha. Unlike those people, the hermit Sumedha was endowed with all the requisites for the attainment of Buddhahood when he met the Dīpaṅkara Buddha. As the Dīpaṅkara Buddha was aware of the pāramī of those He met, He knew that except for one person, none of those present on that occasion was qualified to receive a definite prophecy to be a Buddha in the future. Only the hermit Sumedha received a definite prophecy from the Dīpaṅkara Buddha.

Do you know who can receive a definite prophecy? There are eight factors required for receiving a definite prophecy.⁴⁶ They are:

- 1) Being a true human being.

⁴⁶ Buddhavaṃsapāḷi Bv.II stanza 59 (Buddhavaṃsa 2.59):

Manussattaṃ liṅgasampatti, hetu satthāradassanaṃ.

Pabbajjā guṇasampatti, adhikāro ca chandatā.

Aṭṭhadhammasamodhānā, abhinīhāro samijjhati.

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- 2) Being a true male person.
- 3) Having fulfilled all conditions necessary for the realisation of Arahantship.
- 4) Meeting with a living Buddha.
- 5) Being an ascetic who believes in the law of kamma.
- 6) Having acquired jhāna attainments and high supernatural powers.
- 7) Being prepared to lay down his life for the well-being of a Buddha.
- 8) Having intense and wholesome aspirations for Buddhahood.

As the hermit Sumedha, if he had wanted, he could have been an Arahant after hearing a very short stanza, which met the third requirement. He had fulfilled such pāramī that had he wanted, he could be an Arahant in that life. However, he gave up the opportunity to realise that very great attainment and instead made an aspiration to be a Buddha in order to help all suffering beings by teaching the Dhamma. Regarding the seventh requirement, if the Dīpaṅkara Buddha and his four hundred thousand Arahants were to walk on the back of the prostrated hermit Sumedha as though walking on a bridge, Sumedha would not survive. Knowing this full well, the hermit Sumedha unhesitatingly and courageously prepared himself to render this service to the Buddha. Such an action is called a principle act of merit (*adhikāra-kusala*). As for the last requirement, even if the whole universe were filled with coals glowing red hot and with sharp pointed spears, he would not hesitate to tread through them for the attainment of Buddhahood.

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Is it easy, then, to receive a definite prophecy? We need all these qualities if we want to be a Buddha. Suppose we want to be a Buddha. No matter how great our desire, we are not yet a bodhisatta if we have not received a definite prophecy from a living Buddha. There is so far only our wish to be a Buddha. It is still uncertain and not at all sure that we will indeed be a Buddha. Buddhahood becomes certain only after receiving a definite prophecy from a living Buddha, which in turn comes only after fulfilling these eight conditions for receiving definite prophecy. Knowing that Sumedha was endowed with the requisite qualifications, the Dīpaṅkara Buddha went to him and stood at the head of Sumedha's prostrated body. The Dīpaṅkara Buddha exercised His supernatural psychic power of seeing into the future to find out whether Sumedha's aspiration to become a Buddha would be fulfilled and then declared, 'Sumedha will become a Buddha, Gotama by name, after four incalculable and one hundred thousand aeons.' Do you want to be a Buddha? I won't object if you want to be. This is your choice.

To answer the questioner, I need to explain further. Didn't the Buddha teach the way to be a Buddha? Or did the Buddha only teach the way to Arahantship? This was the question. Do you remember the day the Buddha went to His native place to visit His father, King Suddhodana? On the day the Buddha arrived, His relatives made the young people pay respect to the Buddha. However, those who were old and therefore His elders, and those who were His uncles and elder brothers, thought to themselves,

‘This is my younger brother’, ‘This is my nephew.’ They could not bring themselves to pay respect to the Buddha, who was their junior in age. What did the Buddha do then? He thought, ‘My relatives do not know who the Buddha is. They do not know the greatness of the Buddha.’ Then the Buddha used His supernatural power to work a miracle. Only then did everyone bow down to the Buddha with joined palms. Seeing this, the Venerable Sāriputta asked the Buddha, ‘O Fully Enlightened Buddha, unsurpassed and respected by all the beings in the world, how did You fulfil pāramī so as to become a Buddha? How should those who want to be a Buddha fulfil pāramī to that end?’ The Buddha then taught the way of practise in order to become a Buddha. From this we can see that the Buddha did indeed teach the way to become a Buddha for those with such an aspiration. We need to understand how to fulfil pāramī to be a Buddha. If you follow the way the Buddha taught, it is possible to become a Buddha some day. However, after fulfilling pāramī to be a Fully Enlightened One and then becoming a Buddha, the Buddha’s main intention was to teach the way to make an end of suffering to those sentient beings who had come into this existence with good pāramī. This was for the most part what the Buddha taught His disciples, but the Buddha also explained the way to become a Buddha.

Rare is to be a Buddha. Also rare is to be a true bodhisatta. Therefore, if you want to be a Buddha, you must first of all be a true bodhisatta. After that, please fulfil pāramī for at least four incalculable and one hundred thousand aeons.

Ending the Endless Chase

Question: If I am the third or fourth type of person,⁴⁷ and since I am a layperson, what should I avoid and what should I improve on in order to become a Sotāpanna?

Answer: Do you want to realise the first Path and Fruition Knowledges? If so, you need to leave your home, if not for your entire life, then at least for an extended length of time. If you can't renounce the world permanently for your entire life, then becoming a Sotāpanna is still possible, but you need to practise as a layperson by spending enough time at it while staying in a meditation centre. If you can't commit to doing this, you need to be mindful in your daily life. You need to practise meditation every day wherever you are. Study the Dhamma, read the Dhamma, listen to the Dhamma more. Live with the Dhamma. Then when the time is ripe, you may be able to make a decision to engage in meditation practice.

However, life is uncertain. Death is certain. Who knows when we will die? Therefore, if your mind is inclined to practise meditation, you should decide to make arrangements to do so.

In the round of rebirths, there is no form of existence in which we have not been born. We have been born as humans in many existences. As humans, we have been kings, we have been very rich, and we have been very poor. Likewise there is no one who

⁴⁷ See page 76 for explanations on the four types of persons.

has not been born in the celestial realms. We have already experienced every type of sensual happiness and gain and fame throughout the course of many existences. Over those many existences, you've already acquired and achieved all the things which you're striving after and pursuing now, in this life. You have tasted every possible sense pleasure, but the one taste you have never tasted thus far is the taste of Dhamma. Ignorance, not knowing the truth, covers us so completely that we do not see that we have already experienced every sensual taste. We want these pleasures in this life again, and we are pursuing them and longing for them endlessly. Your life will reach its end before this pursuit of yours ends. Before you end the endless chase, you will end first. So you should make an end as quickly as possible. Do you know what I mean? You should end the endless journey. Instead, you should start a journey that has an end.

Sakkāya-Diṭṭhi and the Sotāpanna

Question: Bhante was saying that when sakkāya-diṭṭhi is removed, a person becomes a Sotāpanna and so will not fall into the woeful states. My question is, how about the heavy bad kamma that he has done in previous lives, or in the present life before he became a Sotāpanna? Why is it that these cannot be effective for rebirth, but can still take effect as obstructive or destructive kamma, for example?

Answer: A yogi may have accumulated a lot of good, wholesome kamma before becoming a Sotāpanna. A yogi may also have committed a lot of

unwholesome kamma before becoming a Sotāpanna. As I have told all of you, ordinary people have all the defilements; all ordinary people have anger, delusion, lust, greed, pride, jealousy, stinginess, and so forth. If unwholesome kamma appears at the near-death moment of these ordinary people, they are surely going to fall into the four woeful states. All their kamma has been committed on the basis of wrong view, especially of sakkāya-diṭṭhi, personality view. They have not removed personality view. The influence of sakkāya-diṭṭhi pervades everything they have done, everything they are doing now, and everything they are going to do. Therefore, their kamma is strong enough to give its results in the four woeful states.

But for a person who has attained first Path and Fruition Knowledges, his Path Knowledge removes three impurities. One is personality view. At the moment of becoming a Sotāpanna, his Path Knowledge removes sakkāya-diṭṭhi completely. Before that, he had held this wrong view and would regard this body as his body, and these five aggregates as his five aggregates. He would hold such wrong perceptions because of his wrong view. Moreover, before attaining Path and Fruition Knowledges, he would regard the defilements arising in his mind as his own defilements – as his anger, his delusion, his greed, his pride, his jealousy, his stinginess, and so on. In this way his kamma is strengthened through the support of sakkāya-diṭṭhi and greatly influenced by it.

After attaining Path and Fruition Knowledges, he no longer sees his body as his. He doesn't regard the

five aggregates as his. He doesn't consider all his defilements to be his. He doesn't hold all the kamma he has done as his. He now sees that they are just due to causes and effects. If there are such and such causes, there will be such and such effects. Without the support of the wrong view of sakkāya-diṭṭhi, and without the influence of the wrong view of sakkāya-diṭṭhi, the unwholesome kamma are not as powerful as before. They are not strong enough to result in rebirth in the four woeful states.

Moreover, those who have attained first Path and Fruition Knowledges have become pure in sīla. They will never break the five precepts. Ordinary people also observe five precepts, but they need to make a great deal of effort to observe them and to refrain from those wrong actions. There are two Pāli words I would like to introduce to you, *puggala-byāpāra* and *Dhamma-byāpāra*. *Puggala-byāpāra* means a person's actions of restraining or efforts to restrain. It refers to actions done through the effort of human beings. The other word, *Dhamma-byāpāra*, means the restraining automatically effected by virtue of the Dhamma. It refers to actions caused by the quality of the Dhamma. These two are completely different. Ordinary people try to refrain from wrong actions by means of their efforts – in other words, by means of *puggala-byāpāra*. By contrast, *Dhamma-byāpāra* has been established firmly in those who attain Path and Fruition. Due to the power of the Dhamma, Noble Ones do not break the five precepts. Their attainment will never allow them to break a single one of the five precepts. This is *Dhamma-byāpāra*.

Furthermore, the near-death object will always be wholesome in the case of Noble Persons, including the very first one, the Sotāpanna, because of their attainment. Because they have removed sakkāya-diṭṭhi, all their unwholesome kamma are no longer supported by sakkāya-diṭṭhi and so have no power to give results at the near-death moment. While accumulated unwholesome kamma will not give results in the form of rebirth-linking consciousness, they may give results after rebirth. In this way, the Buddha and some of His disciples had to undergo certain sufferings in their lives as payment for the unwholesome kamma they had accumulated in the past.

Which is more powerful? The actions caused by the effort of men (*puggala-byāpāra*) or the actions caused by the quality of Dhamma (*Dhamma-byāpāra*)? Without a doubt, *Dhamma-byāpāra* is far more powerful.

May you all come to possess *Dhamma-byāpāra* in this very life.

Vipassanā Object for Path and Fruition

Question: Can we attain Path and Fruition Knowledges by watching the arising and perishing of the five aggregates, *nāma* and *rūpa*, and discerning impermanence, suffering, and non-self? Or do we need to discern impermanence, suffering, and non-self in the first *jhāna-dhamma* through the fourth *jhāna-dhamma* before we can attain Path and Fruition Knowledges?

Answer: To enable the maturity of insight knowledge, the Buddha taught us to contemplate impermanence, suffering, and non-self while seeing the arising and perishing of conditioned phenomena in the categories of internal, external, past, present, future, near, far, superior, inferior, gross, and subtle – all the eleven categories of dhamma. We need to contemplate rūpa in the eleven categories, nāma in the eleven categories, nāma and rūpa in the eleven categories, the five aggregates in the eleven categories, and both wholesome and unwholesome dhamma. This is what we all need to do for the maturing of our insight knowledge.

When your insight knowledge matures, the teacher will teach you *bhaṅga-ñāṇa*, which emphasises just the perishing of the aforementioned conditioned dhamma. If you are diligent in your practice, such that you are diligently engaging in your insight meditation practice at all times with the exception of when you are sleeping, your insight knowledge will mature more and more. Finally you will attain the Knowledge of Equanimity Towards Formations (*saṅkhāruppekkhā-ñāṇa*). At that time, the teacher will make suggestions to you according to your actual vipassanā experience. When you contemplate impermanence, suffering, or non-self, while seeing the perishing of the rūpa, if any characteristic of the rūpa is particularly clear, please spend more time contemplating impermanence, or suffering, or non-self based on that specific characteristic of rūpa. When you see that contemplating internal materiality is very clear and very good for you, and if you then continue practising vipassanā by contemplating impermanence, or suffering, or non-self, you may

attain Path and Fruition Knowledges. When you contemplate just on the external rūpa, you may sometimes realise Path and Fruition while seeing the perishing of external rūpa as you contemplate. Practitioners attain Path and Fruition Knowledges sometimes while contemplating impermanence, or sometimes while contemplating suffering, or sometimes while contemplating non-self. Sometimes you may report to the teacher by saying, ‘Bhante, when I contemplate the first jhāna-dhamma, I feel very good.’ In such a case, please spend more time contemplating the first jhāna-dhamma and seeing their perishing. You may also attain Path and Fruition Knowledges in that way.

So any of these objects can be the last object for your attainment of Path and Fruition Knowledges. The last object is just a single object, not two or more. Similarly, the contemplation on the last object for the attainment of Path and Fruition Knowledges is also just one of the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, or non-self.

What Is Nibbāna? Is It a Realm?

Question: Would Bhante please explain what Nibbāna really is? There are some who have the point of view that Nibbāna is a realm – a realm of emptiness or a realm in which desire ceases. In Buddhism there are six realms; could Nibbāna be the seventh realm?

Answer: Nibbāna is outside of the thirty-one planes of existence. It is beyond the planes of existence. It is not a realm.

There are three types of *loka* – *okāsa-loka*, *satta-loka*, and *saṅkhāra-loka*. *Okāsa-loka* refers to the realms in which beings dwell. *Satta-loka* refers to all the beings that live in the different realms. From the ultimate point of view, both *okāsa-loka* and *satta-loka* are just arising and perishing. They are just ultimate mentality and materiality which are arising and perishing. Therefore they are called *saṅkhāra-loka*. If you look with insight knowledge at the realms in which all the various beings live, or at the beings which are living in the different realms, both beings and realms are all just arising and perishing. They are nothing other than the arising and perishing of ultimate mentality and materiality. Therefore they are called *saṅkhāra-dhamma*, or *saṅkhāra-loka*. Furthermore, both *okāsa-loka* and *satta-loka* are just concepts (*paññatti*). If we break these concepts down into ultimate reality, they are just ultimate mentality and materiality. This is the connection between these three *loka*, these three worlds.

Nibbāna is unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*). To attain Nibbāna, which is Unconditioned Dhamma (*asaṅkhata dhamma*), you need to know and see conditioned dhamma, which is *saṅkhāra dhamma*. When meditators contemplate impermanence, suffering and non-self, they see the perishing of these conditioned dhamma (*saṅkhāra dhamma*), and so they want to be free from the constant arising and perishing of these conditioned dhamma. Instead, they want to attain the complete cessation of arising and perish-

What Is Nibbāna? Is It a Realm?

ing – which is the Unconditioned Dhamma, Nibbāna.

Nibbāna is not a realm. Nibbāna is that which is realised by the attainment of Path and Fruition. Nibbāna is *akata* – it is not done by anyone, nor is it caused by anything. Nibbāna is *amata* – it is deathless. Nibbāna is *santisukha* – it is real happiness. Nibbāna is *appaccaya* – it is causeless. It isn't the case that Path Knowledge makes Nibbāna appear; rather, the attainment of Path Knowledge realises Nibbāna. Nibbāna exists all the time. If it were caused by Path Knowledge, it would be conditioned dhamma. It is not conditioned dhamma; it is unconditioned dhamma. It exists whether the Buddha arose in the world or whether the Buddha didn't arise in the world. However, it is only when the Buddha arose in the world that the way to attain and realise Nibbāna was discovered, and it was so discovered by the Buddha.

Nibbāna is not some sort of realm which all the Fully Enlightened Buddhas and all the Arahants enter. Nibbāna is not a realm at all. Only while the Enlightened Ones are alive in this physical body can they attain or realise Nibbāna anytime by entering Fruition. This is an attainment they can practically experience in this very life, and not a realm they enter after they pass away.

Is Nibbāna the Only Goal?

Question: Is Nibbāna the only goal for all Buddhists?

Answer: If you like, you can choose to be reborn in the brahmā realm. You can also choose to be reborn in the human realm again. However, the utmost goal for those who want to make an end of suffering is Nibbāna. Your goal may be different depending on your inclinations, your understanding, your point of view, your sense of urgency, and the degree of your attachment to life.

Does the Mind Cease In Fruition Attainment?

Question: Does the mind cease when a Noble Person enters Fruition Attainment (*phalasangama*) taking Nibbāna as an object?

Answer: The mind does not cease when a Noble Person enters Fruition Attainment (*phalasangama*) taking Nibbāna as an object.

This is explained by the Buddha to Venerable Ānanda in the Samādhi Sutta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya in the Chapter of the Tens.⁴⁸ Venerable Ānanda asked the Buddha:

‘Bhante, could a Bhikkhu obtain such a state of concentration that he would not be percipient (1) of earth in relation to earth, (2) of water in relation to water, (3) of fire in relation to fire, (4) of air in relation to air, (5) of the base of the infinity of space in relation to the base of the infinity of space, (6) of the

⁴⁸ AN.X.1.1.6 Samādhisuttam (AN 10.6 The Discourse on Concentration, also known as the Samādhi Sutta).

Does the Mind Cease in Fruition Attainment?

base of the infinity of consciousness in relation to the base of the infinity of consciousness, (7) of the base of nothingness in relation to the base of nothingness, (8) of the base of neither-perception–nor-non-perception in relation to the base of neither-perception–nor-non-perception), (9) of this world in relation to this world, or (10) of the other world in relation to the other world, but he would still be percipient?’

‘He could, Ānanda.’

‘But how, Bhante, could he obtain such a state of concentration?’

‘Here, Ānanda, a Bhikkhu is percipient thus: “This is peaceful, this is sublime, that is, the stilling of all activities, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbāna.” It is in this way, Ānanda, that a bhikkhu could obtain such a state of concentration that he would not be percipient (1) of earth in relation to earth, (2) of water in relation to water, (3) of fire in relation to fire, (4) of air in relation to air, (5) of the base of the infinity of space in relation to the base of the infinity of space, (6) of the base of the infinity of consciousness in relation to the base of the infinity of consciousness, (7) of the base of the nothingness in relation to the base of the nothingness, (8) of the base of neither-perception–nor-non-perception in relation to the base of neither-perception–nor-non-perception,

(9) of this world in relation to this world, or
(10) of the other world in relation to the other world, but he would still be percipient.’

In the subsequent sutta, Venerable Ānanda asked the same question of Venerable Sāriputta. Venerable Sāriputta recounted his own experience, which was similar to what the Buddha had described.

Venerable Ānanda then asked for further clarification:

‘But of what was the Venerable Sāriputta percipient on that occasion?’

Venerable Sāriputta answered by giving a simile:

‘One perception arose and another perception ceased in me: “The cessation of existence is Nibbāna, the cessation of existence is Nibbāna.” Just as, when a fire of twigs is burning, one flame arises and another flame ceases, so one perception arose and another perception ceased in me: “The cessation of existence is Nibbāna, the cessation of existence is Nibbāna.” On that occasion, friend, I was percipient: “The cessation of existence is Nibbāna.”’⁴⁹

⁴⁹ AN.X.1.1.7 Sāriputtasuttam (AN 10.7 The Discourse Concerning Sāriputta): ‘*Bhavanirodho nibbānam bhavanirodham nibbānam*’ – ‘The cessation of existence is Nibbāna, the cessation of existence is Nibbāna’. The commentary to this sutta paraphrases it thus: ‘On that occasion, friend, I was percipient with the perception of Fruition attainment.’ In other words,

Does the Mind Cease in Fruition Attainment?

How do we understand this? With the intention to enter Fruition Attainment, a Noble person enters the earth kasiṇa first jhāna. Emerging from it, he contemplates impermanence or suffering or non-self by seeing the perishing of the earth kasiṇa first jhāna dhamma. Then he inclines his mind to enter Fruition Attainment. And he enters it (*phalasaṃpatti*) taking Nibbāna as an object.

At that time, in his mind there is no perception of earth in relation to earth, but there is the perception of Nibbāna. One perception arises and another perception ceases at that time. The Fruition Attainment is not ‘the cessation of perception and feeling.’ In the same way, any Noble person can enter Fruition attainment, taking Nibbāna, as an object, by contemplating impermanence or suffering or non-self through seeing the perishing of any conditioned dhamma such as ultimate materiality or mentality or any jhāna dhamma, either internally or externally, and in any period of time – past, present or future. There are conditioned dhamma and Unconditioned Dhamma. The conditioned dhamma are arising and perishing rapidly all the time. In the Unconditioned Dhamma, Nibbāna, mentality and materiality cease completely.

So the mind does not cease when a Noble Person enters Fruition Attainment. There is the perception of Nibbāna. Some practitioners claim that they know nothing during the time they are in Fruition Attainment, and it is only when they emerge from it

because perception was present, this was not ‘the cessation of perception and feeling perception’ (*saññāvedayitanirodha*).

that they know they have entered Fruition Attainment. If it is so, they have no perception of Nibbāna at that time. Indeed, they have fallen into the bhavaṅga mind state, in which they know nothing and are soundly asleep. What they have attained is ‘sleeping nibbāna’, not the Nibbāna declared and taught by the Buddha.

The Sharing of Merits and Its Benefits

Question: In my mind there is still this doubt. At the end of each Dhamma talk, we always share merits. The last two lines we recite are: ‘*Mama puññabhāgaṃ sabbasattānaṃ bhājemi. Te sabbe me samaṃ puññabhāgaṃ labhantu.*’ The meaning is very simple, that is, we say that we share our merits equally with all beings. So my question is: Do the words ‘all beings’ here mean that we are sharing our merits with non-living beings too? Does our sharing of merits extend to those who are suffering in the woeful realms? Does it include our families? Are all of these also able to receive our sharing of merits?

Answer: The Buddha taught His disciples to share merits with the departed. Also, one of the ten *kusala sucārīta kamma* (wholesome kamma of good conduct) is sharing merits, and another is rejoicing in the sharing of merits done by others. These are two of the wholesome actions that constitute the ten wholesome *sucārīta kamma*. This is what should be done by those who understand how to act for the good of themselves and the good of others. After we have done wholesome deeds, we should share our accumulated merits. With this intention, then, we share

The Sharing of Merits and Its Benefits

our accumulated merits with our departed ones. Sometimes we have no particular intention towards any departed ones, and we just simply share merits with those who hear our sharing of merits. If we rejoice when others share their merits, we accumulate wholesome kamma. What type of wholesome kamma do we accumulate? If you rejoice when others share their merits, wholesome states arise in your mind. This is the essence of sharing merits. In this way, even though we say ‘all beings’ in the recitation, it specifically refers to those who can hear, those who know how to rejoice, and those who have been born in one of the hungry ghost realms. The name of this type of ghost is ‘*paradattūpañvi peta*’ - those who can upgrade their lives rejoicing in the merits done by their family members. For that reason, we share our merits.

Sharing merits is like lighting candles. You have a lighted candle in your hand, and there are many around you holding a candle in each of their hands. You then light their candles. The collective light becomes bigger, brighter, and stronger. This is how the sharing of one’s accumulated wholesome kamma leads to even greater merits for oneself.

It is similar for those who know how to rejoice in the sharing of merits done by others: Not only are they able to accumulate good kamma themselves, but they also have an opportunity to accumulate wholesome kamma if they know how to rejoice in the merits of others. Even though they cannot make merit themselves, their rejoicing accumulates wholesome kamma and creates wholesome states of mind for them. If these wholesome states of mind appear at

Selected Questions and Answers

the near-death moment, they will be reborn in a good realm.

This is directed at those who understand how to rejoice in the sharing of merits done by others, and those who understand how important it is to share merits both for those who have passed away and for those who know how to rejoice. Therefore, this is something we all need to do, in order to benefit ourselves and others.

Aspirations and Sharing of Merits

We have accumulated a lot of wholesome kamma – through dāna, sīla, and bhāvanā. There is no result which compares with the realisation of Nibbāna. Therefore, all the good actions you have accumulated in this retreat should be for the realisation of Nibbāna. Other attainments and other achievements are not as important. You may not be able to make an end of suffering as you are making your way in search of the Dhamma, because your accumulated pāramī is not yet sufficient; but you will be reborn in a good realm if you make an aspiration to attain Nibbāna. Then you will have the intention to make an end of suffering in every existence, so that you will heedfully make an effort one life after another. Therefore, making an aspiration to make an end of suffering is the supreme aspiration of our lives. So now we will make aspirations and share merits:

*Idaṃ me puññaṃ āsavakkhayāvahaṃ hotu.
Idaṃ me puññaṃ nibbānassa paccayo hotu.
Mama puññabhāgaṃ sabbasattānaṃ bhājemī;
Te sabbe me samaṃ puññabhāgaṃ labhantu.*

May this merit of mine
lead to the destruction of the taints.
May this merit of mine
be a condition for the realisation of Nibbāna.
I share these merits of mine with all sentient beings.
May all sentient beings
receive an equal share of my merits.

Sādhu! Sādhu! Sādhu!

Abbreviations

About the Footnote Citations

Footnotes cite the Pāli sources first, from the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka, followed by the most common citation format for the English translations.

Abbreviations for Sources Cited

- AN Aṅguttara Nikāya
 (Collection of Numerical Discourses)
- Dhp Dhammapada
 (The Verses of Dhamma)
- DN Dīgha Nikāya
 (Collection of Long Discourses)
- MN Majjhima Nikāya
 (Collection of Middle Length Discourses)
- SN Saṃyutta Nikāya
 (Collection of Connected Discourses)

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Buddhavandanā

Paying Respect to The Buddha

*Buddho Bodhāya deseti, danto yo damathāya ca;
Samathāya santo dhammaṃ, tinno'va taraṇaya ca;
Nibbuto nibbānatthāya, taṃ lokasaraṇaṃ name*

The Buddha, the Enlightened One, the refuge of the three worlds, the arahant (Nāga), having known the Four Noble Truths by Himself and wishing to enlighten others that deserve to be enlightened like Himself; having tamed Himself with respect to the six faculties, and wishing to tame others that are fit to be tamed like Himself; having attained peace Himself, and wishing others that are worthy might attain peace like Himself; having crossed over to the other side of the ocean of samsāra, and wishing others that are worthy might cross over to the other shore like Himself; having extinguished the fire of defilement at the four stages, and wishing others that are worthy might extinguish the fire of defilement like Himself; out of compassion, he expounded the glorious Dhamma to devas and humans for forty-five years. To Him, The Buddha, the Nāga, the refuge of the three worlds, I pay homage physically, verbally and mentally in all humility with joined palms raised.

May the Noble Wishes of all beings be fulfilled.

May all be well and happy.

*Hitvā kāme pabbajjimsu
Santo gambhiracintakā
Te tumēpya anusikkhāvo
Pabbajitā supesalā*

Good people in the ancient days in both the present and past world cycles, destined to be omniscient Buddhas, private Buddhas, and Noble Ones, had reflected deeply on the true nature of life and unhesitatingly gave up all their living and non-living possessions, which are objects of sensual craving for the vast majority of people and are prone to various harms and dangers. Seeing the inherent faults in those possessions, they chose to renounce the world and to live ordained lives in seclusion in order to undertake the training and practice of morality, concentration, and insight meditation, diligently and ardently.

May good people of the present days who have come into existence and are imbued with the perfection of renunciation, emulate the great people of those ancient days and unhesitatingly renounce the world with hearts founded upon moral purity. May these good people live ordained lives in seclusion and be able to undertake the training and practice of morality, concentration, and insight meditation, diligently and ardently.

May all know and see the Dhamma in this very life.

May all be free from suffering.

About Bhikkhu Revata

Bhikkhu Revata was born in 1971 in Mawlamyine, Myanmar. He received his bachelor's degree from Yangon University in 1994 and independently taught computer technology for five years. He was ordained as a Theravāda bhikkhu at Pa-Auk Tawya in 1999, with the Most Venerable U Ācinna, the Pa-Auk Sayadaw, as his preceptor. He has studied the Pāli scriptures and commentaries and speaks Burmese, English, and Thai.

After practising meditation under the guidance of the Most Venerable Pa-Auk Sayadaw, Sayadaw U Cittara, and Sayadaw U Sila, in 2002 he began teaching meditation to local and foreign yogis, both ordained and lay, and is currently an assistant teacher of the Pa-Auk Sayadaw. He is responsible for teaching local and foreign yogis and for training successful practitioners to teach meditation themselves.

A distinguished meditator and teacher, he has taught extensively both in Myanmar and abroad. He has conducted meditation retreats in China, Indonesia, South Korea, Latvia, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

He has written four books in his native language, three of them in collaboration with the Most Venerable Pa-Auk Sayadaw. Like the present work, other collections of Bhante's teachings and Dhamma talks have been printed in English under the titles of *Awaken, O World!* (2006), *The Disciple Within* (2008), and *Bearers of the Burden* (2011). His talks have been translated into Korean, Indonesian, Thai, Vietnamese, and Chinese.

Other teachings from Bhikkhu Revata in e-book, audio, and video formats can be found on the Internet at www.revata-bhikkhu.org.